

# Camas

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## Camas, Summer 2019

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et al.: Camas, Summer 2019

# THE NATURE OF THE WEST Camas

Summer 2019 | CADENCE



with M JACKSON



# THE NATURE OF THE WEST Camas

VOLUME 27 NUMBER 2

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*Camas Magazine* cultivates a community of writers and artists dedicated to promoting ecological and cultural diversity and resilience in the American West.

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**OUR TITLE** *Camas* takes its name from the plant *Camassia quamash*, which is native to the American West. *Camas* has historically served as a staple food and medicine for Indigenous communities. Its harvest continues longstanding reciprocity between land and people.

**OUR HISTORY** Founded by Environmental Studies graduate students at The University of Montana in 1992, *Camas* provides an opportunity for students, emerging writers and artists, and established voices to publish their work alongside each other.

**OUR FRIENDS** *Camas* received support for this issue from the Associated Students of The University of Montana, the Clark Fork Coalition, the Wild Rockies Field Institute, the Missoula Writing Collaborative, Montana Natural History Center, the University of Montana Environmental Studies Program, and donors.

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COVER ART:

*Take Off!*

JULIE MASON







## From the Editors

This summer, we offer an issue centered on the theme of cadence. Cadence is often defined as rhythm, as metrical beat or resolution of melody. Yet cadence is also the space between wing beats and the measure of steps as we wind a path into the hills. It is found in both spoken word and birdsong. It is the rate of factory output, the rushing of river water and pace at which we schedule our lives. We hope, with this theme, to dig into the space created by movement: the relationship between motion and stillness, and what that space embodies.

We open with an excerpt from Dr. M Jackson's upcoming novel, *Ice and Water*. M's piece gives us a glimpse into a journey of self and place, exploring themes of loss, relationship and home. After that, we swing between stories of connection to land, connection to identity and to one another. The stories here offer varied interpretations of pace and pattern, which we thought was perfect. Cadence is movement down the road just as it is the rhythm of words flowing across the page.

To further capture the nuance of pace, we are featuring some young voices in this issue. With support from the Missoula Writing Collaborative, we are including poetry from three local elementary school students. Their poems examine relationship to place, which builds on our understanding of the speed at which we move through this world.

This issue is an exploration of cadence, through poems and prose, photography and artwork. It closes as it opens, returning to movement across landscape and a relationship to home.

We hope, in this issue, to share a variety of interpretations of pace. Let these pages fill those small moments between appointments, the jostle of the daily commute or the quiet space before the noise of the day begins.

Thanks for reading,

Kitty Galloway and Sydney Bollinger



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# Ice and Water

FICTION | M JACKSON

\*This piece is an excerpt from M's upcoming novel

I swung the axe overhead, over shoulder, and down down sinking through the maple round and colliding with the chopping block. The halves ruptured, falling east and west onto their split kin. I kicked the pieces away and told them to stay, settled another round on the block and swung the axe again, again, the wood pieces piled up and thought, satisfaction, and smiled, but then remembered and satisfaction fled and I continued chopping wood, chopping.

The mountains circled up above my home, my farm of one house, two barns, woodshed, three outbuildings, tax bill, pastures and over two hundred acres, ghosts, ditches, border fences with low wood rails for the moose to walk through and garden fences with high square metal weave to protect chard, beets, and sunflowers. The farm was outside of Burnt Bay, in southeast Alaska, spread over semi-sloping land with a fair amount of hill stretching up into mountain on the east side and cut by a marauding glacial river to the west.

The mountains to the northern boundary were edged jagged and steep; they protected the farm sometimes and were damned bastards other times, blocking light and stalling clouds until they relieved themselves of enough snow to collapse the roof of the woodshed and move on. I'd had to rebuild the woodshed myself so I could chop in it, axe swinging up overhead and down down.

I stopped for a break, a pile of wood evidence of time, of thirty minutes that stretched through the past hour of waiting for the appraiser to show. Late was late.

The force of my grip startled me—I set the axe down and paused; took inventory of myself like my mother once taught me when she was going through an Alcoholics Anonymous phase before the rye whiskey came back and came back again and then it was just me. And Hanna.

I was never good at inventory so I ended up reciting the geography of my outerwear—boots from Torfi's in town, canvas pants with frayed reinforced knees acquired in Anchorage; red black red checked flannel jacket that was once my husband's and now was mine like everything

I could lay eyes on full circle from the wood pile. I had broad shoulders my husband once said made me look like a man from the back, was thick where women in movies were always slim, had a red braid woven with more gray than seemed appropriate for thirty-six years old which I liked to tuck inside the flannel and pinch between my shoulder blades.

I'd learned to properly split wood the start of my first winter in Alaska fifteen years previous right where I stood, the day after I got married and moved to the farm and Greg said we'd need to get more wood chopped as there was two of us now and he handed me the axe and in the years since I'd learned the exceptional pleasure of splitting cedar rounds, of quartering spruce logs and shaving down knotty pitch kindling, of eyeing wood and understanding exactly how I'd approach it with a single axe that we'd been using since people first walked with axes across the land bridge from Siberia

and decided Alaska was good home country for outsiders.

I stretched, thought post-stretch, enough wood, set the axe aside in the shed and left the pile. I could stack tomorrow. It was good to leave tasks for the next day, or why bother with the next day at all? Then again, I wasn't sure if I would even be at the farm the following year to burn the splits. Likely as it was looking, not.

A car sounded along the road that fronted the farm's property, and after a moment I saw it slow at the driveway, gravel crunching, wheels turning. A blue pickup leaning towards rust idled up the driveway. I squinted at it. The appraiser, likely. Thirty-five minutes late.

The truck nosed in, wound up the low hill, past the lower barn, and parked in front of the main barn. The door creaked, squealed, creaked again, and a big man peeled out the driver's side, tanned brown Carhartts, rubber boots, moss Gore-Tex jacket. Over six foot. A dark black beard stretched ear to ear like a bank robbery.

He looked around, reached back inside the truck for a small bag, slammed the door, looked round again. He spotted me beside the main house, walked across the lawn in steady strides, neatly slaloming the pyracantha.

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knotty pitch kindling.



*Sunset Flow* | MATT WITT

"Hi!" he called out, friendly, open.

I detected a tinge of Midwestern in his voice, nodded in response.

"Ruth Harper?"

"Yes."

"You preparing for a fight?"

"I'm sorry?" I asked, not following.

The man laughed, gestured at my feet. I looked down, saw the axe, smiled. He had a sense of humor. I relaxed. You never knew with people out here.

"I'm cutting splits," I told him.

"Aha! Well, I'm Silas Gustavus, by the way. We spoke on the phone last week back. Sorry I'm late. Time got away from me this morning."

I nodded, reached out, shook Silas's outstretched hand. "It's fine. I got more work done."

I wavered on how to proceed. Was an appraiser a guest, a professional, something else?

Silas coughed, dug a rag out of a pocket, hacked into it, coughed again. "Sorry," he mumbled, shoved the cloth back in, looked up, around. I watched him take in the wood shed, the pile of splits, the clipped lawn and wraparound porches skirting the main house. The boots neatly lined up toes-out by the door.

"You by yourself out here?" he asked.

"Would you like some coffee?" I responded, moving already towards the house.

"Sure, that'd be wonderful," Silas responded. "But could we take it to walk?"

"To walk?"

"That'd be perfect. I checked the weather coming

up, and it looks like this might not hold." Silas gestured at the bluebird skies. "I think I should take advantage of the light and weather and walk the property for the initial assessment. That way, if the weather turns, I can do the structures in the rain no problem."

I nodded. Sensible. I nodded a lot those days, nodded as information came at me from all directions and I didn't know what type of response was required and head motion seemed to satisfy everyone but myself.

I walked up the porch stairs and told him to look around the immediate gardens and barns while I got coffee, and then I'd take him through the property.

In the kitchen, I boiled water in the kettle with hands that had performed similar tasks a million times and watched him through the garden window. He circled the main house, taking pictures and writing notes on his clipboard, and then disappeared into the pump house. When he reappeared, walking back in front of the kitchen, I knocked on the window.

"Do you take cream?" I called through the kettle-steamed glass.

"Thank you," he responded, which didn't answer the question and left me undecided. I weighed the question for a moment, then nodded and poured a fair amount of cream into his coffee mug. Cream changed the texture of the coffee, transitioning it from thin bean water into richer comfort that stuck to your throat. I loved drip coffee accented with enough cream to turn it a light buckskin color. Silas looked like someone who might also enjoy creamy coffee.

He was waiting for me at the bottom of the porch steps



as I ferried two ceramic coffee cups out the front door. I handed one off to him mid-steps and we set off past the lower barn towards the mountains.

We walked through the lower pastures, slipping through the wooden rails running along the shallow swales dividing the four fields. Silas stopped now and again, setting down his mug to photograph the area.

"Can you tell me where the property borders are in respect to where we are?" he asked when we'd reached the forest's edge. He pulled a printed map of the property out from a file folder in his bag and clipped it to the plastic cover.

I stepped closer to him and looked at his map. Taking a second to orient myself, I pointed out the pastures.

"These," I explained, "run a bit like a crescent between the farm's operating center and the rest of the property." My finger swept over the cleared area. "We're here, and

Each step kicked up more dark,  
dank smells; smells that worked  
together in thick primitive clusters  
to coat my face like a welcome  
protective cloth.

then all of this, pretty much most of the property from the mountains to the river, is forested. The property line is supposedly at the peak of this mountain and runs east to west, but for all intents and purposes the mountain slope is the edge."

Silas bobbed his head, his face intently listening. Standing close, a loamy coffee scent came from him. My nostrils flared.

"Let's walk through the woods here," I said, stepping away, away from him. "There isn't quite a trail, but there is a slight way through."

He agreed, and we moved into the thicket. Five steps in and the light dimmed appreciably. I slowed for a second, giving my pupils a chance to dilate and adjust. The land sloped upwards away from us, giving the already tall trees a looming weight. Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and Douglas fir crowded in, knitting a thick damp canopy that sifted sunlight sparingly down the forest floor. Devil's club, false azalea, and thimbleberry spread out before them, each stretching branches fronds leaves towards the most sky and light and life.

Silas whistled softly. "I know this isn't old-growth, but wow."

I smiled, my chilled cheeks cracking. "Well, it hasn't been logged over a hundred years, I guess. So it's a good second growth intact forest."

"This has never been logged?" Silas queried.

"Not here. I wouldn't!" I retorted sharply. I'd never cut these trees. Greg used to mock me—but most of the wood we split was falldown wood, smaller trees that toppled in

the winter-blow-around storms. We'd eye them, let them dry out a year or two, then wrap a chain round their trunks and drag them with the tractor back to the farm bays.

"But, well, yes, I mean, all of the land around Burnt Bay has been logged. Even here. It was the trees that drew people in for the town, but that was over a hundred and fifty years ago. Everyone just stayed since for the fishing."

"Oh. I just thought the town was a fishing town."

"It is," I assured him. "That's all there is out here. No real other industry. The occasional tourist, but fishing is what we all revolve around. Lumber is done unless some landowners all go in for a second round."

I paused for a minute, then continued. "My husband's people owned this place before us. They came up after the first war, I think. They homesteaded and got the first hundred and eighty acres, and then I think Greg's dad bought or traded for the last two twenty-acre parcels or something like that."

"Can you still homestead around here?" Silas asked.

I shook my head. I wished. "No, that was repealed up here somewhere around 1986. People homestead now, but that means something entirely different than it used to. That means organic food and wifi."

Silas laughed, and for a moment, I did too. "True," he said.

"Let's keep going. It's about thirty minutes through this and then a great view."

"Sure. Mind if I jettison the mug here? We're coming back this way?"

I nodded, and he put the mug down atop a waist-high boulder-log combo covered with ribbed bog moss and a few western maidenhair ferns. I rushed the last third of the lukewarm coffee into my mouth and set my mug adjoining, two orphan ceramics standing guard in an Alaskan forest.

Silas took a picture of the forest with his camera phone, and we walked on, stepping around and over moss-coated plants, logs, rocks.

I loved the smell of these woods, the protective shelter of the tall trees so different from the immense openness of my early years on the island. I breathed deeply as we walked, me slightly in front, him behind. Each step kicked up more dark, dank smells; smells that worked together in thick primitive clusters to coat my face like a welcome protective cloth. Smells that elicited some form of recognition deep inside my core; smells that came back in the middle of the night when I'd wake up alone.

"I really enjoy walking through here," I said to him, breaking the silence, babbling. "It always makes me think the trees are wearing sweaters." I pointed out the common witch's hair and speckled horsehair lichens that were growing thickly on the bark and branches of the trees. Watery-green cat-tail moss covered most of the spaces not occupied by the lichens.

"You know a lot about the plant life," Silas complimented.

I felt myself flush. Was I performing, showing off? Greg used to call it 'recitation.' "Here comes another one



of Ruth's recitations," he'd say. He'd say. But he'd still listen.

"That's living here in such a rich ecosystem," I explained. "All the forests here, they're the last mirrors of what used to grow unbroken from Anchorage to Northern California, in Scotland, Japan, Ireland, Iceland, Turkey—so many places. And now it is just a few pockets left."

One time, long ago, I'd wanted to be a grade school teacher. That was before I'd come up to Alaska and quicker than a blink of eye found myself married and running a farm and fishing boat.

"So is logging entirely off the table? These woods up here, there is some prime board feet here," he asked, craning his neck up, up.

"Yes," I explained firmly. "It seems sacrilegious somehow, you know? I don't want to make money off hurting this forest? It took so long for it to come up again, to be this, I don't know, right?"

A smile flickered so quickly across Silas's lips that it could have been a trick of the light, but I was looking so I saw it. Shouldn't have been looking, but I caught myself, looking. But he tamped down whatever it was, nodded, and lifted a low branch to duck under. "So you're a secret environmentalist in an Alaskan fishing town?"

"Well, no," I admitted. "Not any type of environmentalist like you'd get down south."

Silas snorted, then released his booming laughter. It echoed in the shadowy forest.

"Hey!" I responded defensively. "Laugh all you want, but I actually do care about this place. I'd like to see it stay intact if possible."

Silas laughed, but more gently, turning twisting stopping to peer down into my face. That was something that took getting used to much later, that habit he had of staring full on into faces, open and closed and receptive and exposed. Greg had always angled in from the side, quick looks from a chin pointing elsewhere.

I flushed, but didn't detect mockery in Silas's face; rather, kindness in the laughter.

"I'll keep your secret, Ruth. I get it. I grew up believing in Ents."

I smiled into the interior of my mouth, acknowledged the comment with a stiff nod but shifting my brain to eight years previous when I'd spent several weeks cataloguing the trees in the forest out here and could have sworn one of them had flicked branchy fingers at me before reverting back to being still and quiet and tree.

"We're going to have a magnificent view of the Entwash in about five minutes," I replied. "We have to earn it, though. It gets a whole lot steeper first."

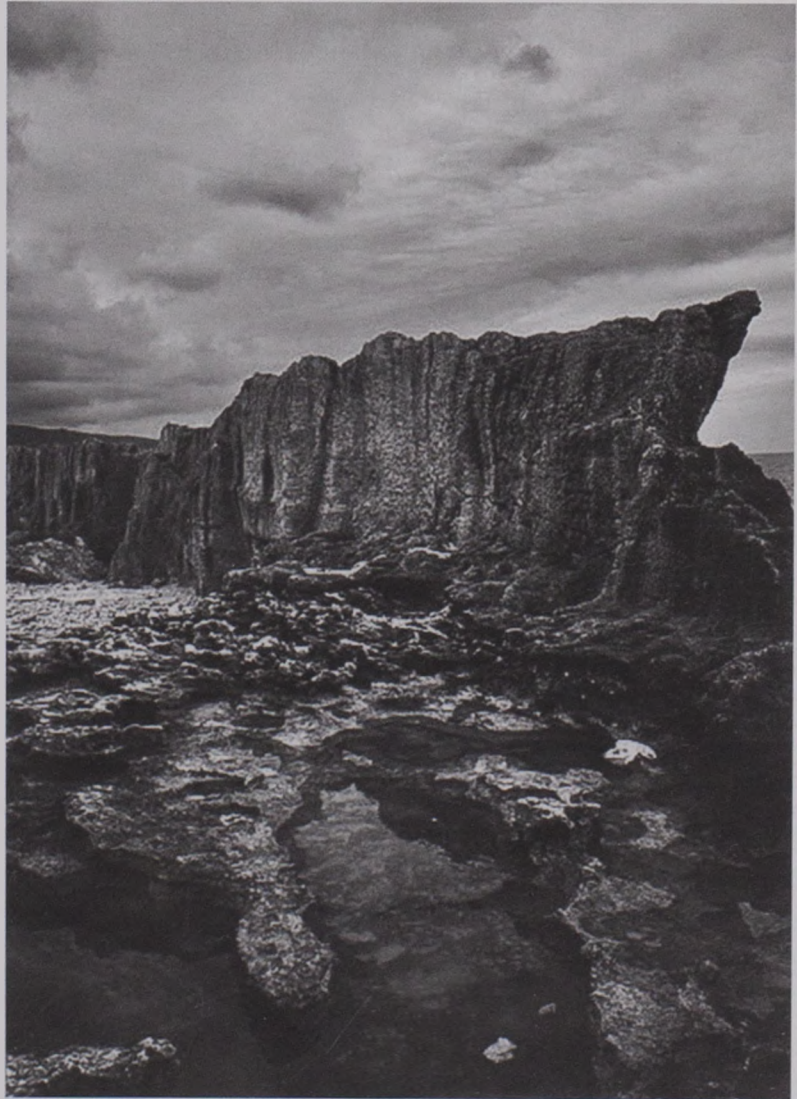
The slope chunked considerably in front of us, and I stepped around him and led the way, aware his eyes were trained on me as we maneuvered up the steep incline.

Abruptly, up up and up, the trees stopped, and we stepped out onto a narrow ledge of an enormous trough.

One of my favorite places on the whole property. Thirty feet from the forest edge, the land dropped, collapsed, disappeared, fell steeply away, a gray slope of scree crumbling hundreds of feet down to the rocky bottom where thick gray water chugged along in a small river. The whole thing looked like an enormous bathtub, and the first time I'd come out here with Greg all those years ago I'd been breathless and stunned at the sight.

"The Entwash?" Silas confirmed, looking down at the river.

"Yes," I agreed. "But in reality, that's the Salmon River." I could have named it anything I wanted as the river started



*What Becomes of Walls* | BRIANA GERVAT

on my property, but it took me years to recognize my own voice.

"Really," Silas asked, awed, turning south. "I drove past the Salmon on my way out here, and it was much larger."

"Ya," I agreed. "It picks up a lot of steam as it flows south, and a bunch of smaller bits flow into it, and then it heads into Burnt Bay and flows out the harbor. This is just the headwaters here because it flows out of the ice."





*Reaching* | HANK DART

Silas turned, and he wolf-whistled a long low note as I pointed up to the Northwatch Glacier flowing down through the mountains and into the vale.

"Holy shit," he exclaimed. "How much of your property is that glacier?"

"Well, technically, our property line extends up to that rocky point thing sticking up where the Knockblock Glacier flows into the Northwatch," I pointed.

Northwatch Glacier was shaped like a large Y, with the smaller Knockblock feeding into the Northwatch and flowing down as a single glacier to the valley's entrance. Once joined, the ice rumped and wrinkled, then smoothed and flowed flat into the valley, hemmed by the steep valley walls on either side.

"I read somewhere that this ridge we're standing on was carved by a glacier, but an older glacier, when a glacier during the last ice age came out of the mountains. The Northwatch now flows into the valley, but just not all the way up here to the forest line. It's like the glacier found an old river bed and flowed into it without having to do the heavy lifting of carving a track. When Greg's dad applied for homestead, he just specified in the application a rectangle that wasn't congruent with any of the landforms, which was unusual for the time. Most of the property lines in this area follow rivers or coastlines or mountains. But Greg's dad applied, and he used that pointy rock marooned up where the glaciers meet as his northern boundary point."

Silas stared at his map. "So, everything on the other side of the Northwatch is Forest Service land, but you own the ice?"

"Well, as far as I understand, the line runs through that rock there where Knockblock is, so we own the Northwatch Glacier from Knockblock down. There is supposedly a surveyor marker at the southwest corner of the property, and if you follow that line you do get all the glacier."

"This is incredible property, Ruth."

"I know." I'd been blown away when I first moved out. Greg hadn't before showed me much more than his bedroom in those quick weeks of courtship, and getting to know the place in detail had more than made up for the immediate weeks of absence after the wedding when he'd gone out with the boat. It was beautiful property, the first real home I'd ever had. I'd felt instantly connected, of the farm.

"It is a shame you're having to sell it."

I looked away, felt the weight of the last few months press in. A rawness surfaced, floated about my throat like a flame. I swallowed, swallowed down a sentence without a stop and a story barely worth telling.

"Yes," I said to Silas, and he politely turned away and stared at the glacier while I composed myself.

A few minutes moved by, and then Silas, with his back to me, asked if I'd ever gone out onto the glacier.

I shook my head, but then realized he couldn't see me, so I stepped up next to him and said no. I explained that I knew people had special equipment and went sporting on glaciers, but I'd never felt the urge.

He shook his head, and started walking towards the ice like it drew him. I trailed him. "Let's follow this ridge



up here until we get closer to the ice. I'd like to take some pictures," he said.

"Ok," I said, not sure how much the glacier added to the overall value of the farm beyond arguable aesthetic qualities.

We followed the tree line north, keeping the sharp drop-off to our west and marveling at the silent ascent amongst the trees to line up in orderly pickets so close to the edge. As we walked, the slope grew more gradual until, about fifteen minutes along, we were walking the ridge above the glacier itself.

"Gorgeous," Silas said, holding his phone pointed at the ice. The glacier was uneven on its edges, shaped at its end a little like a cloven hoof. Water gushed out of the center, where the two lobes met in the middle, forming a small pond at its edge that formed into a river and flowed out down valley. The ice was dirty white gray covered with a surprising amount of soil that looked like it had sloughed down from the scree slope above the ice but below where we stood. I estimated that ice to be about half a mile to three-fourths a mile across, and where the glacier met the mountain on the side we were standing on, it fractured in a series of cracks and chunks. Even hundreds of feet above the glacier, we could hear the loud rush of moving water.

Silas turned and grinned at me, eyes bright, and for the first time, I glimpsed him in his not-appraiser mode, as a guy genuinely excited about something. The sight nearly took my breath away. His eyes, weathered and sparking, collapsed into an elephant's hide of wrinkles.

He gestured at the ice. "Look, right down slope," he pointed. "Does that look a little like a cave or something? On the edge?"

I looked down at where the glacier met the slope, and saw a small opening, an alcove under a lip of ice that extended out from the ice like a halved umbrella.

"Do you want to..." his voice trailed off uncertainly.

"What?"

"I've just never..."

"What?"

"Wait, never mind. We should get back to why I'm here."

"What? What were you going to ask?"

Silas turned towards me again, his face half smile half professional.

"You want to go down there to the ice and check that cave out?" he asked.

Greg had stressed for years that glaciers were dangerous. Sometimes, from our porch, we could hear ice booming, snapping, echoing off taller mountains shaped by bigger ice. I'd never felt an urge to see the glacier from anywhere but up on the ridge, safe. I thought for a moment, observing that it was highly unlikely that I was going to get anywhere closer to the ice than where we stood.

"Sure," I said, then paused, astonished that acquiescence had fallen out of my mouth. "That sounds fun."

Silas looked again at the slope, which was not as steep as where we had started. It was still a long slope, but more

gradual. "We can either scree-ski straight down," he said, "or, slant in at an angle. There is a fair amount of bedrock where that ice is sitting, and we can aim for that cluster of boulders near the cave."

"Either way," I said, my pulse quickening and belying my fake nonchalance. Either way looked like sure death. But what did I care then?

Silas stepped off the ridge and sank down into the loose scree. He immediately started sliding. He took a giant step and was suddenly ten feet down the slope. He whooped, all semblance of professionalism shedding from him like snakeskin. "Come on, Ruth!"

I took a deep breath.

I'd wait for him up here.

I stepped off the ridge.

Everything started sliding, and my skiing-instincts kicked in and I leaned back, heels down, knees bent, and slid like greased lightening down down down, kicking rocks and vegetation patches and Silas caught my arm at the bottom and I tumbled onto my knees in a breathless thrill of scrabbling pebbles and dust and blasted pulse.

"Yes! Yes!" Silas shouted.

"Yes," I huffed, speechless.

I held my other arm out, and Silas tugged me to my feet. Small rocks rained down from legs turned liquid. "God, that was fun," I said, surprised.

"Ya, it really was. Don't turn around, though, that's going to be a rough hike up."

I turned anyway and peered up the slope we'd just come down. It was calm minus the huge smear trails his and my footprints had made. It looked a lot steeper from the bottom.

Silas pointed to the cave entrance. "Do all the glaciers in the area have these?" he asked.

I shrugged. "I don't know," I told him.

"Man, if I lived here, I'd be going to these things all the time," he said, staring at the wall of ice that towered at least thirty feet over us.



*Resilience* | AMBER CARPENTER



"Wait, you don't live in Burnt Bay?"

"No, not yet. I just moved up at the start of spring, and it's September now, so I've been here about four months?" he paused, closed his eyes, remembered. "Ya, that sounds right. I was giving it the summer to figure out if this town was home."

I looked at him, recognizing the impulse. I too had just meant to come up for the summer.

"Actually," he continued as we stared at the ice, "I got in during the first week of May, and it was a wee rough. I couldn't move into my rental for the first week, so I had to bivvy in my truck. The landlord of the place I was going to rent was out for two days doing a search and rescue for a missing boat."

I opened my mouth, closed it, turned, walked towards the cave in the glacier. Silas walked next to me, continued. "But I moved in, and I'm off Ferry street with a great view of the harbor, and its good," he said. "And folks are friendly here. But I don't think I've seen you," he said, framing it like a question.

"I don't get into town much," I responded automatically, eyeing the large opening in the glacier side that was about ten foot by ten.

"Husband keeping you locked up?" Silas joked.

"Something like that," I said. My throat felt dry.

The ice dripped, rocks shifted.

"This is amazing," I said, switching subjects. "Take my picture?"

I handed him my smartphone without waiting for a response and walked frozen into the glacier. My feet skittered on the uneven bedrock. I took five more steps and stopped. Every muscle in my body stopped. My heart stopped.

The light had changed as I'd entered the cave's antechamber. Outside, there was a white glare from the sunlight bouncing off the gray scree. But in there, the light softened, filtered, refracted.

Inside the glacier, the light was thick blue, touchable. Everything, from the red on my flannel to my skin eyes hair boots rocks glacier sky everything, all were bathed in Picasso's wildest, most lurid blue. I never thought I could walk into a space and taste a color, feel a color, be inside.

To this day, I still hold and remember the very first time I walked into an ice cave.

Sunlight filtered down through a few opening holes in the ice above, and the roar of dripping water moving through the ice overpowered. Somewhere not too far from this part of the ice water was flowing quickly.

Silas stepped into the cave, holding my phone in front of him. He released an audible gasp as the light changed.

"My god," he said, "I feel like we're in a tropical ocean. This blue is unreal!"

As my eyes adjusted, it felt like the air around me was growing even more blue. Everything was blue. The ice above me was turquoise blue, the ice itself scalloped in repeated one-foot by one-foot sections. The ice at eye level further back in the cave was darker, almost a black blue,

and when I looked at my hands it was as if my skin had taken on a blue dye. It was dreamlike.

"Ruth, smile." Silas held the camera towards me, and I stiffened, looked somewhere near the camera, and then briefly, our eyes met, and I felt for one second my face soften. "Good!" he said, "I took about a thousand."

He handed the camera back, and I offered to take a picture of him. He agreed, and we switched places. After, I photographed the blue blue round holes in the ceiling of the ice cave, and the curved ripples in the sidewalls.

We stepped through the antechamber to a much bigger cavern, this one long and running north south with the glacier flow. The floor was strewn with silt and stones, and it looked like water had run over the area recently. Small sediment debris were hewn together like wind-rows. The ice curved overhead in a gentle arch, a cathedral of icy worship.

I was taking pictures of the ceiling when a small hunk of ice dislodged from the side and tumbled to the ground. I shrieked, and the sound echoed throughout the ice cave. Silas rushed over to me.

"We should get out of here," Silas said, grabbing my arm and pull-walking me out, covering the space of the antechamber in three quick strides and then we were out, back into bright afternoon light blinking and something inside of me deflated.

"Wow, that was, that was unreal," Silas said, looking back at the ice. "You have no idea it is so blue in there!"

I nodded. Being inside the ice felt like I'd left the planet, felt like I'd stepped somewhere else where the laws of the world were ruled by color not gravity, where blue was the pinnacle and everything else wished to simply be blue. I'd loved it.

"We were in there for like five minutes," Silas observed, looking at his watch. "It felt longer."

I nodded, then said, "we should be getting on."

Silas agreed, and we started the slow climb back up the scree slope to the forest edge, and then back around the mountain slope to the far pastures. We walked companionably, not saying much. The blue weighed between us like a moment unacknowledged. It was late afternoon by the time we returned to the main house, and I was tired and winded.

As we walked around the main house, I spotted June Elderridge's postal van parked in the driveway next to Silas's truck. June herself was sitting on my porch step, fanning her face with my mail. She lit up as she saw us round the corner.

"Ruth!" she called, an accusation, an acknowledgement, an inquiry all dressed up as my name. "You got an Amazon box. I put it inside your door."

"Thanks, June," I called back up at her. She looked inquisitively, eyes cutting like razors at Silas, then at his truck. I could see wheels whirling in her eyes.

Turning to Silas before we got to June, ten feet from ears I knew were the physical embodiment of the town's social media, I said to him firmly in a voice that attempted



normal but came out low, guarded, chilled: "Thank you, Silas. I guess you'll need to come back out sometime next week to do the buildings, seeing as how it is getting so late?"

Silas looked at me curiously, cocked his head, checked his watch which even from my angle showed hours more of good daylight. He nodded slow though, and said, "I think so. It was nice to meet you."

He walked towards his truck, clipboard tucked under his arm. I stood rooted, both feet in the ground, watched him step into his truck. If I'd known then how little time we'd have, I would have stopped him full on, I would have asked him from the truck and taken him in for coffee and gotten to know him and held on a little longer. Made him stay. Stay always. But we never fully understand what we stand to lose until it is going gone and we're powerless before a closed door.



*The Early Bird* | IRIS M. KIRKWOOD

I turned away, walked up and met June on my porch. She handed me my mail wordlessly, her eyes glued to Silas and his truck as he backed out, turned, and drove down the driveway. Questions vibrated off her and fell stacked at my feet.

"That's the new guy, right, Silas? He's staying at Fay's sister's place in town by the harbor?" she asked-stated.

I didn't respond. I stared at his truck driving away as she continued, "What's he doing in town? I heard he

was helping with Turney's construction team. You getting some new work done up here, Ruth?"

I flipped through the mail she'd brought. Ads. Bills. A letter from south.

"I heard he's also working for the insurance company in Juneau because Randy had Silas give him a quote for the heavy equipment he's selling..."

June reached out, set her hand on my shoulder. "No, honey," she breathed, and I looked up from the stack of envelopes and into her sympathetic eyes. "You're not...?"

I nodded, wordless, my eyes burning from her to the sky.

"Oh Ruth, why?"

I shook my head. I could not do this now, not with words.

Silence slouched around us, moans of early evening settling in and moose rustling, trees bending, wind caterwauling down the mountains.

I could hear her waiting, holding ground and truth and what she thought she knew but didn't want to know and I could not say it so I opted out.

"June," I told her, "let me tell you later. I want to get inside and get some food in me."

June shook her head in understanding, released my arm, clicked her teeth in acquiescence. "I'll see you tomorrow, honey," she said as way of good-bye, stepped down off the porch, headed to her van and was gone.

This news would be over town in minutes. I went inside, sat down on the couch, sighed. A secret never stayed still in Burnt Bay.

My smartphone beeped, signaling a new message. I grabbed the phone, opened the messenger app, and read: "Thank you for showing me your farm. I'll come by next Monday to finish the assessment. Silas."

I smiled, then, warmth suffusing through me in a way that probably wasn't appropriate, and, in a fit of magnanimity, I opened my photo app and looked through the images I'd taken that day. The blue of the ice cave was just as I'd see it in real life. I opened Instagram and posted four photos tiled together, one of the glacier, two of the scalloped glacier walls, and one of myself inside the cave. I hashtagged the post, geotagged the whole location to Burnt Bay, and captioned the images with a happy face.

I set my phone on the table by the couch, stood up, stepped over the Amazon box, took myself upstairs to the loft bedroom, and collapsed on our bed, asleep with my boots on and a flash of blue behind my eyelids.

Four days later two Korean tourists, Yerin and Chloe, pulled into my driveway in a car they'd rented to tour Alaska. They held their smartphones out, cued to my social media post, asking to see the ice cave in the Northwatch, and, at the end of the day, when they drove away covered in mud and sweat from our long hike there and back, I held three one-hundred-dollar bills in my shaking hands and the tiniest spark of hope.



# To Dust

WILLIAM CORDEIRO

Above stacked rocks a red-tail  
hawk stalks prey. Heat stabs

& swivels over every

vein. Rivers halt; these latter days  
when false water hovers over tar,

a road's far crest, light ricochets

on metal. Distances & levels  
slide from lavender to cerise, slab

to vapor, scab. Buff sediment, exposed,

is listing in a zone nothing over-  
looks—each bone's scintilla

fidgets in this dream-slow,

life-petrified antithesis  
where all twists inward, rooted

to each breath. Here, a heart's little

more than atmospheric  
tricks: an excess luster that's

bent inside a too-huge sky.

Clouds spectra & berserk:  
a ribbon's ceaseless vertigo. . .

Dear erosion: Ca y u rea t is?

For miles only grit survives.  
Bleached greasewood; scalloped

outcrops. Soon, three-four million years

crumble off a cliff-top's strata.  
Rimrock sifted, its tallus scarred &

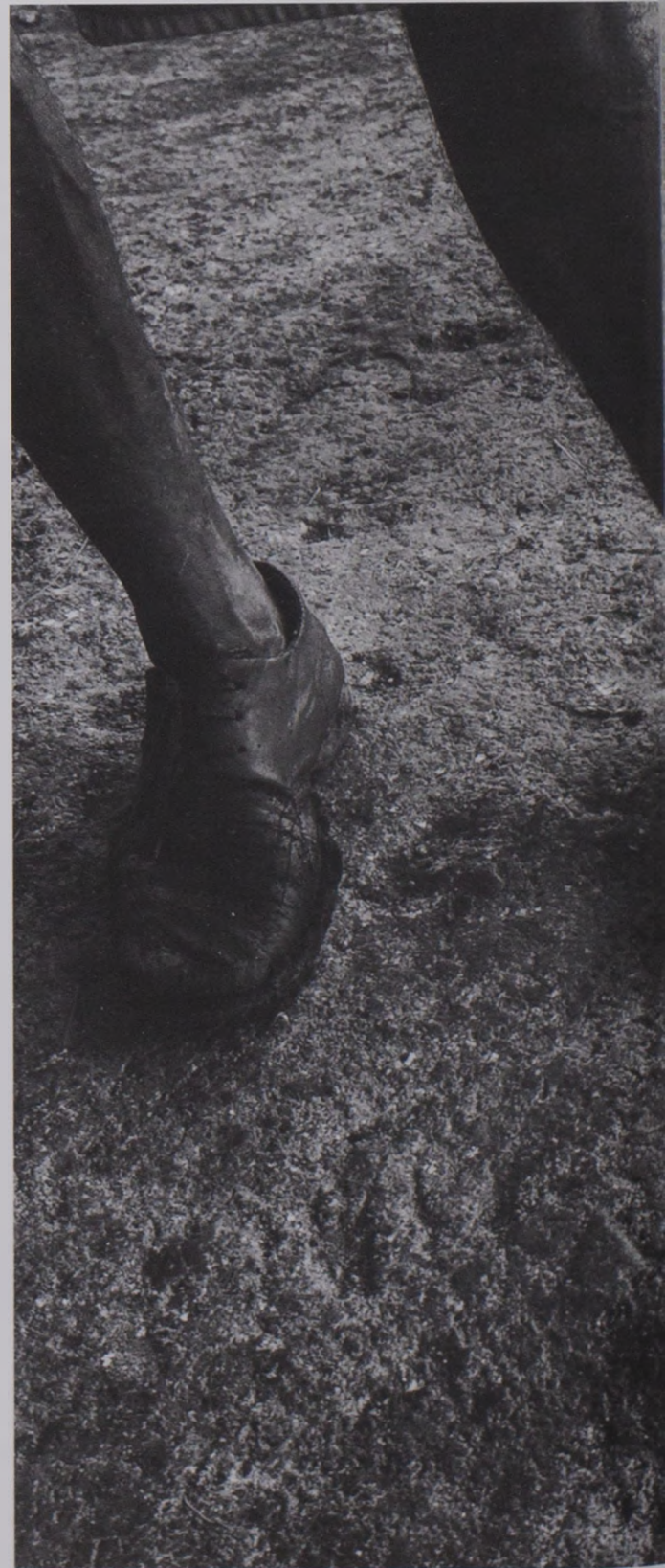
notched. Flash floods could gallop

downwind of any day-hike in a box  
canyon. Startled from a niche,

a lizard skitters. Its twitching

stops. Stock still but for a trill  
of pulsing throat. A shadow

blinks across its slit third eye.







*Untitled* | GUILHERME BERGAMINI



# Bud Break

NONFICTION + ILLUSTRATIONS | LYN BALDWIN

In March, I hunger for water.

The potential is there. You can read it in the spread of dry sediment beyond the river's edge, in the flotsam caught in the upper branches of shrubs; you can feel it in the dried cottonwood leaves that crunch underfoot and in the orange longing of willow stranded above the water line.

Some think spring is a time; I know it as a place. A curve of land where two rivers—one big, one small, the Thompson and the Tranquille—spread into the basin of Kamloops Lake. After more than ten years in this valley in southern British Columbia, my family knows that if it's March and I'm gone when they wake, I'm out Tranquille, pacing my way into spring.

Bud break. Say the words. Feel the soft puff of the first "b" and the sharp cut of the "k". Bud break. It begins as a slight swelling and then crashes into a wave of photosynthetic green, rimmed by floral pigments easy to miss.

Bud break. Embryonic flowers and leaves slip free from the tight harness of bud scales. Pulled by hormones, called by light, each species cracks differently. Cottonwood flowers burst red for male, green for female. Rocky Mountain maple burgeons into lime-green parasols. Red-osier dogwood splays outward, exposing tight balls of nascent flowers. Douglas-fir erupts into pointy needles, discarding golden scales like candy wrappers.

Bud break. A visible cracking that salves my need; the first trickle of hope through winter's austerity.

This year when late February's unseasonable warmth pulls up tulip spears on the south side of my house, my desire rises early with them. But the next morning out at Tranquille, dirty snowbanks hunker in the shade and, above me, tree branches clatter in a cold wind. I walk downstream along the river, checking buds. Cottonwood, saskatoon and snowberry; dogwood and willow. All inert; all still dry.

For more than a month, I pace through the compost of last year's growth, trying to cultivate patience with this not-yet season. On especially bitter days, when the world seems to contract against the cold, I obsess about what I can't see: crystalline gene sequences clicking on; hormones accumulating in outstretched twigs; the first cambial cell dividing; root hairs shouldering first this way, then that, against microscopic soil particles. I find some small solace in the arrival of male robins, the glide of pintail and

then green-winged teal across a nearby pond, and in the ethereal colour of the first mountain bluebird. But there is no relief for my thirst—not when the rivers remain low and the buds closed.

Why, I wonder, when the arrival of spring rests with the story of our earth's canted orbit around the sun, am I so thirsty for water?

There's no denying its importance. My body, your body, is full of it. In the language of chemists, water is "sticky." Built from three atoms—two hydrogen, one oxygen—the construction of each water molecule electrically charges its atoms. Positive for hydrogen and negative for oxygen. Not a charge we can feel splashing into the river but charge enough to choreograph the dance of molecules.

Opposites attract. Water molecules cleave to each other and any charged particle. Negative to positive. Positive to negative. Exposed to any long thin column—a glass tube, a water straw, a column of hollow plant cells—water climbs upward, pulled by its attraction for an opposite polarity, dragging more of itself along behind.

In all trees, water rises from root to leaf, traversing the braided channels of tracheid and vessel elements. Come summer, when the cottonwoods of Tranquille reach their photosynthetic maximum, evaporation will kick loose the uppermost molecules in the chain. Transformed into gas, these water molecules will bump from leaf to sky through stomata. Hauled by attraction, linked by polarity, up to fifty gallons of water—more than I could carry—will flow from soil to air each day.

But before any of this can happen, water must find and then plump into growth the thousands of embryonic cells that sit packaged today in tight bud scales. Cells that formed last summer; cells that hunger, just as I do, for water's return.





March dribbles out until the entire valley is burdened with expectation. In town, the last of the snow melts. I find rivers in miniature carved into the roadside sand, complete with alluvial fans and deltas, meander bars and oxbows. On the last day of the month, I drive back out to Tranquille. In the distance, volcanic hills lumber up through dust-colored pigments. In the valley bottom, the Thompson River lies gaunt, surrounded by the soiled bones of its own channel.

As I near my normal pull-off, resentment swells through me. I'm so sick of this. I don't have the patience for my normal walk. Instead I drive on, switch-backing up and out of the valley. Only when the road levels off above the valley side, do I stop. Truck engine ticking, I pull on gloves and hat and step out into the thin morning light. When I turn to look back out across the valley below, I see, perhaps for the first time, the larger history of water written into the land I walk each spring.

Water. Earth mover, earth carver. Pulled by the weight of the earth, water falls downhill, sculpting, eroding, building, depositing; its action at any one moment shifted by gradient and curve, by slope and flow. Collectively, water molecules reshape earth's skin. Mountains erode, canyons deepen, lakes fill.

Below me lies the land that water built. The topography tells the story: from the north, an alluvial fan, built by the Tranquille River, slants overtop the flat deltaic surface built by the Thompson River. Year by year, carried by water fast and slow, cobble and silt have built fan and delta into floodplain. A floodplain that grows westward forty feet each year; that will, experts estimate, fill the eighteen-mile long basin of Kamloops Lake in 4,000 years. Even now, in the slanted light of morning, the shadows clinging to the banks of old stream channels reveal water's imprint in the floodplain's surface.

Water rises, and then falls. And then rises again. Come June these channels will soak between five, even ten feet water, as snowmelt floods free, unhindered by the earthen dikes found farther upstream. Come June, I will paddle my kayak through the mid-canopy of the cottonwood trees below.

But now, looking down from above, I feel it: the pulse of longing that beats through time in this place. I am not the first, nor the last, to hunger here; I am but one in a long line of those who have sought solace on this particular dry and dusty intersection of fan and delta. Every landscape has a place where the hunger season breaks first. A bay where the ice melts first, a hillslope where the fiddleheads uncurl earliest, a forest where the warblers sing first. This is mine.

I'm back in my truck, nearly without thinking, driving back downhill to the floodplain. Outside my truck, I slip under the railroad bridge and then down towards the dry



stream channels I saw from above. With each step, the wind blows away a puff of dust. My seasonal incantation of desire: today I'll walk it along channels that taste water but for a few weeks each year.

And it is here—on this last day of March, not far from the road—that I find it.

Bud break. One single, golden cottonwood bud cracked, blood red stamens exposed. A split line of colour that drops the flag on this year's season of growth.

Bud break. Waiting for it always sharpens desire. But this is the way of things—molecules gather, pulled by gravity, by the tension of unequal concentrations, until they form a taut bow of intent.

The same can be true for a life. I want, I realize, to be like water. I want to rise in flood and fall in drought. I want my days to be pulled with attraction even as they are infused with the grace of persistence. I want to know the braiding of rivers and trees, to be pulled by forces big and small, to have little things build into big things, to have my days arc with intent.

Such a life, I realize, necessitates hunger. March is the necessary coiling, the expectant tension, that underwrites a state change: winter to spring, liquid to gas, dormant to growing.

Go ahead. Feel it. ☾





*Among the Meadow* | MOHAMMAD ALI MIRZAEI



# Northwest Passage

C.W. BUCKLEY



He walks to hear them groaning in the dark  
Those old neighborhood conifers, bending one into another  
On windy nights, he can almost hear them dream

Is it the Sound that flows through their limbs, or the wind?  
Either way, it's the song of an orca elder  
With no granddaughters left to learn it

All things visible and invisible subsist in their boughs  
So, what if maps charted our dreams, he wonders  
Instead of fluid borders or even watersheds?

Then they would plot what descends, but not where it comes down  
Or even whether it portends good or ill  
D.B. Cooper and his falling fortune, or one final, deadly fire balloon

Record the flight plan of all Rainier's saucers  
Catalogue the earthy zodiac of mima mounds  
Plumb the eerie, resurrecting depths of Mel's Hole

Newer editions expand the taxonomy of octopi  
Both Tacoma giant and Olympic arboreal  
And mark the dens of Sasquatch slumbering beneath Mount Saint Helens

Cryptoregionalism is an emerging field, and not half so weird  
As that pizza joint sign reading "No firearms in this area"  
Between the thermostat and the business permit

Supremacists call themselves "identitarians" and feed Spokane's homeless  
While "prolife" people of faith imprison and impoverish children  
Is nothing waking true?

In darkest summer nights, he looks instead to Wedgwood Rock. Glacial. Erratic.  
Silent out-of-towner that doesn't speak cedar  
It overstayed its visa long ago, and shows no sign of leaving



# How to Love an Earth Moon River Woman

NONFICTION | SAM KECK SCOTT

To Love and be Loved  
by an Earth Moon River Woman  
first, you must Love yourself  
Because an Earth Moon River Woman knows  
that first, she must Love herself  
And to watch her do it  
is to watch her gently pull the tide in  
to cover all the day's rocks  
To watch her do it  
is to look within and wonder  
"why am I not doing that for myself?"

An Earth Moon River Woman  
puts truth before comfort  
and asks that you do the same  
To Love her is to learn messiness,  
both hers and your own  
Because truth is not a made bed  
Truth is not white curtains  
Truth is not white  
Truth is  
wet fistful of earth  
moontime red  
salt river over skin over cheekbone

Being Loved by an Earth Moon River Woman  
is to be loved by a lighthouse  
The light, when it's on you, feels like salvation  
The light, when it's on you, is all yours  
Her presence is genuine, never forced, never expected  
Unlike anything you've ever felt before  
But then that light inevitably turns and shines  
on other things, other people  
And you have to ask yourself if you can be  
okay in the darkness?  
If you can find light in other places?  
But most importantly, if you can make your own?

When you confide in friends about what it's like to be  
in Love with an Earth Moon River Woman  
everyone agrees that it sounds too hard  
"She doesn't love you like you love her,  
or she wouldn't be acting this way."  
You ask for their corroboration and yet  
time and again you find yourself defending her,  
because Earth Moon River Woman

doesn't Love untruthfully  
Earth Moon River Woman doesn't Love  
from the bottom of the cramped well  
that they're talking to you from  
Earth Moon River Woman isn't acting  
this way or that way,  
because Earth Moon River Woman isn't acting

To be Loved by an Earth Moon River Woman  
is not to be coddled  
There will be no coddling  
Earth Moon River Woman  
trusts you to take care of yourself  
And then you get mad at her  
when you don't take care of yourself  
Why would I take care of myself  
when you're right here to do it for me?  
Earth Moon River Woman is having  
none  
of  
that

And so you start taking care of yourself  
You remember how  
You remember that it has always been yours to do  
and no one else's  
You remember that you are every age all at once  
living inside a ball of time  
That if the little one without words  
cries out to be held,  
there is a sturdy man ready to hold him  
That if that sturdy man is feeling scared,  
the one with grey whiskers will wrap him up and say  
"of course this hurts, beautiful young man,  
of course it does."  
But then the beautiful young man  
looks into his own older eyes  
and sees that somehow  
they only became more gentle  
as time etched tributaries into the skin around them  
from so many rivers  
and so much sunlight  
and every smile  
And the young man hears his own young voice say:  
"We don't get to know  
But we do get to trust."

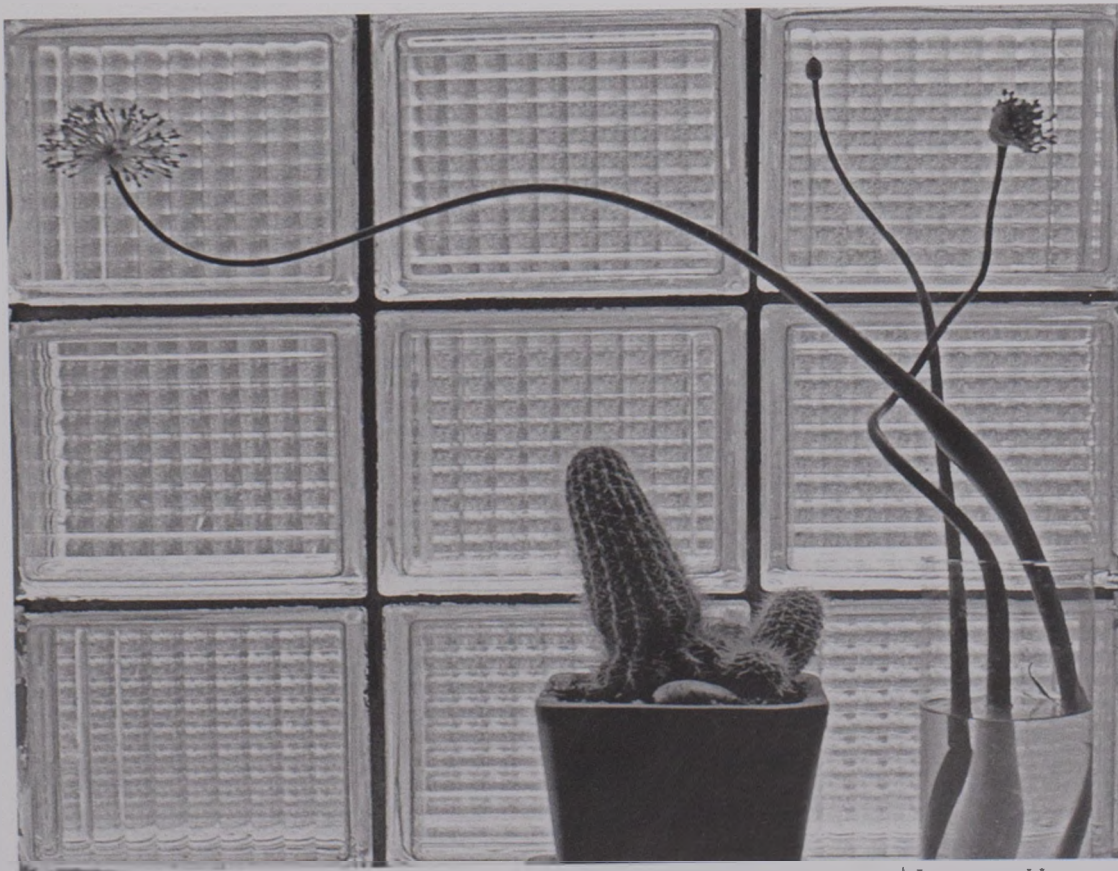


To Love and be Loved  
by an Earth Moon River Woman  
is to not get to know  
There are no false promises  
To Love and be Loved  
by an Earth Moon River Woman  
is to trust  
Because there is only room for truth  
And there should only ever be  
And once truth is the land you live in,  
the sky becomes clear blue listening,  
The ground is green and brown and solid  
with all that you have always known  
The moon is a silver compass  
gently pulling your tides

If we're brave enough to listen,  
we have everything we need  
to stay in truth with ourselves  
And if that listening tells you something  
you don't want to hear?  
If it tells you

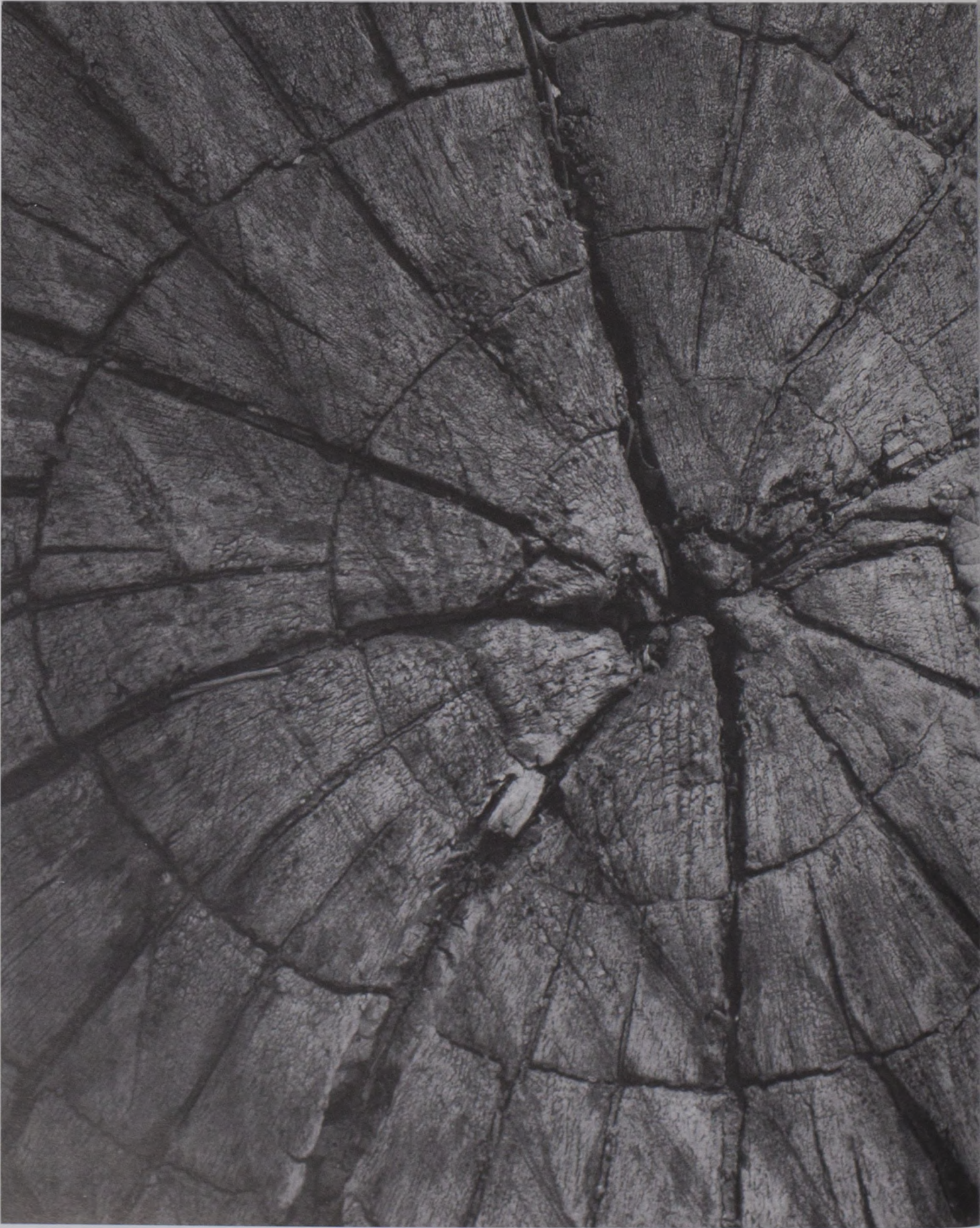
that you simply don't Love the way that she Loves?  
Even though you already proved  
to both her and yourself  
just how long  
you can stay in the air with wings on fire?  
That's when you close your eyes  
and lean in a little closer  
"Burning wings is not truth," is what you'll hear  
Truth is,  
it's okay that you don't Love the way that she Loves  
And yes, of course it hurts, beautiful young person,  
of course it does  
But if it's true, then there's nothing to do but listen  
as the sky tips like a vase into your ear

The final thing you must do  
to Love an Earth Moon River Woman  
is to let her go  
Which is simply letting go of the story you made up  
that she could ever be yours in the first place  
or, more importantly,  
that you would ever actually want her to be

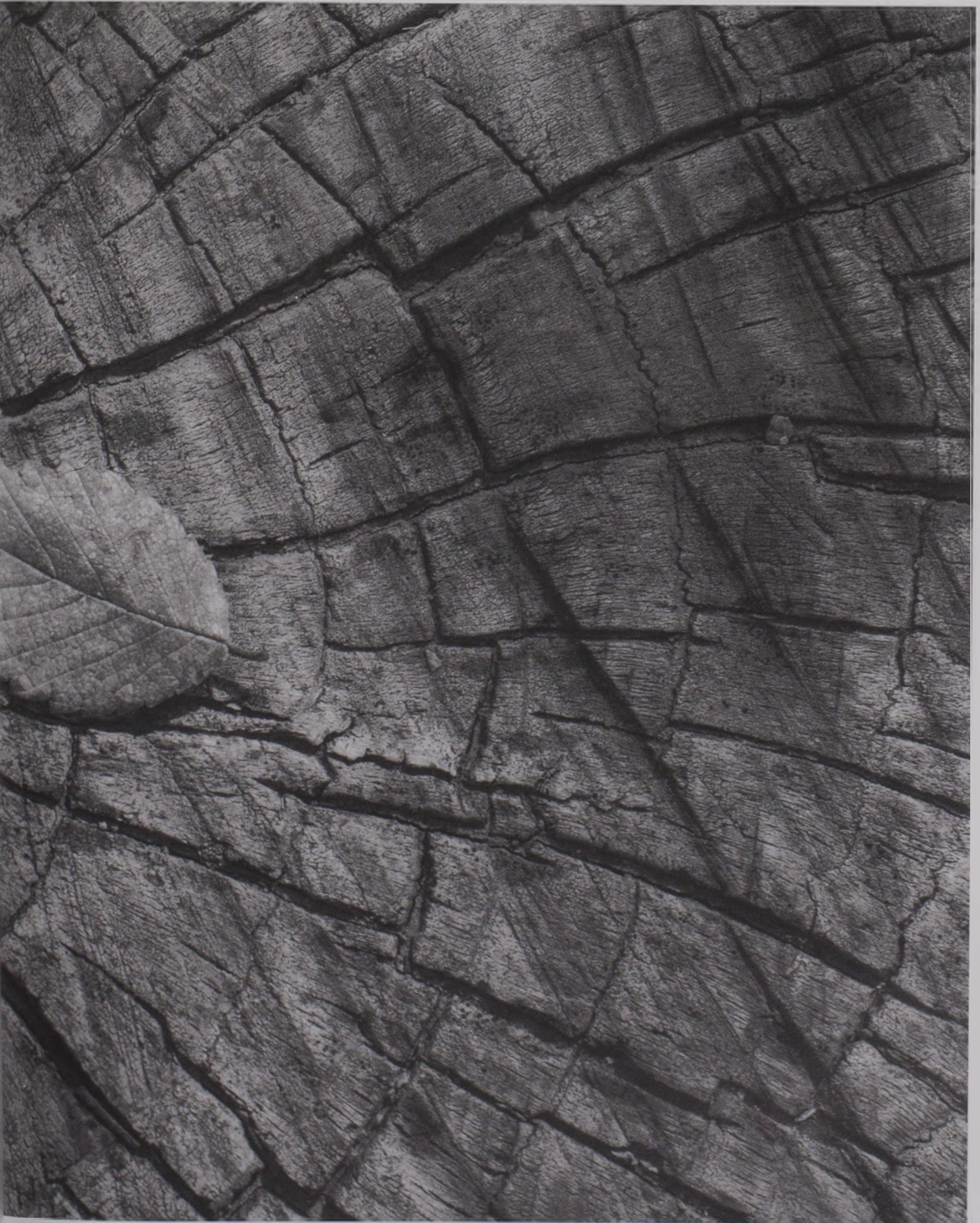


*onion\_copy* | JEFFREY HERSCH









*Reunion* | JULIE MASON



# Traveling 101

NONFICTION | ASHLEY STIMPSON

I've been back on the East Coast for three weeks and my flannel shirt still smells like Nevada: musky sage, that heavy desert perfume. It will take one more week of adjunct teaching to pay for the Kia Forte I drove from Reno to Baker, on famed US 50, America's Loneliest Highway. They make you pay extra for that—taking the car one way. A drop charge it's called, as if you've abandoned the car in the middle, as if all journeys are meant to be circular.

My final destination was Great Basin National Park, one of the “undiscovered” national parks, the ranger will tell me when I register for the backcountry. By “undiscovered” he means “too far away from an interstate for most people to bother.” But on the right side of Carson City, some 300 miles from the park, I felt embarrassed to learn that I was already in the Great Basin, that it is in fact a mighty tear of land, so called for its self-contained system of rivers and streams. A derelict watershed, an inland empire of vapor and dust.

If you were to trace US 50 onto a blank sheet of paper, the line you drew would mimic the landscape the road shears in two: great heaves of mountains ranges, looming like the hesitant crests of black ocean waves. Between them, valleys of verbena explode like fireworks and the rain-starved earth cracks open like peanut shells. Heading east, the scenery reinvents itself endlessly: naked hills surrender to scrub-smothered mountainsides that will, if you insist on driving long enough, transform before you into the alpine peaks you probably think of when you think of the American West.

The majority of the road passes through public land; in fact, the majority of Nevada (around 85 percent) is public land. This means that the dizzying number of dirt paths that peel off the highway like the skin of ripened fruit—the ones that dissolve into the horizon or disappear beyond ridges before giving away their secrets—are accessible to just about anybody with hiking boots or 4-wheel drive. If this is the Loneliest Road, I thought, coveting each one, what does that make these splintering trails? These million rocky mysteries?

Reminders of how many roads there are to choose from and how many more we leave behind.

I'm not sure when US 50 lodged itself into my consciousness, but I was probably 16, maybe 17. It almost definitely happened in the back room of the AAA office on Ludlow Street in downtown Dayton, Ohio. My father, the mailroom supervisor, who was affable and well-liked there, got me the summer job. We drove to the squat, yellow brick building separately every morning, even though we worked just a flight of stairs apart. I felt more grown-up that way.

My job was to assemble TripTiks, now a seemingly ancient tradition. These totems of middle-class travel were invented by an industrious AAA branch manager in Cleveland, but the word itself has etymological roots in the French “trippyque,” which was essentially a passport for

## Reminders of how many roads there are to choose from and how many more we leave behind

a vehicle. And AAA's TripTik was a passport, in a way, too, but also so much more: a hand-curated collection of routes, reservations, and brochures to—not just get the driver where she needed to go—but to provide her with the answers to questions that, today, she would simply ask her passenger to tap into Google.

It worked like this. Say I received a request for a TripTik from Dayton (the rusty city where I was born) to Baltimore (the rusty city where I live now). Sitting at my large desk, which was actually a mosaic of three unwanted desks salvaged from the storage room, I would carefully unfold the map of the eastern United States. I would smooth it out before me like wrapping paper. I would identify the most logical route, using two or three of my fingers as wayfinders. I would apply circular stamps to delineate alpha and omega, and another to mark possible roadwork delays or congestion-prone areas. Last, I would highlight the route in an authentic shade of orange. The finished project looked like a Christmas tree, bright and baubled, transforming the map from something foreign



into something festive: in short, a holiday. Your holiday.

The real fun came in assembling the journey into a flipbook, pulling individual pages from a hulking wall of inserts, each representative of one chunk of American asphalt, dirt, and sand; parks and parking lots; city blocks and farmers' fields. These long, rectangular pages were the descendants of AAA's very first maps, called stripmaps: large cardboard panels distributed to the earliest American drivers, when cars had cranks and most of country's roads looked like the ones I peered down in Nevada.

These inserts were numbered and corresponded to a key, so that you could create virtually any route you wanted, following any sequence of roads you could imagine. I had recently squeaked through statistics class, and I marveled often about how many unique combinations the system offered.

For the TripTik from Dayton to Baltimore, the first page would lead the driver from Dayton to Columbus, some 71 miles of flattened ground and fattened cows between them. After Columbus, I would pull another insert that showed the way to Wheeling, WV. Because the Pennsylvania Turnpike was under heavy construction that summer, I would then direct my invisible customer south through Morgantown, WV, and on to Cumberland, MD, along Interstate 68 that slices through the Alleghany Mountains before meeting back up with Interstate 70, which ultimately dead-ends and deposits its passengers into the humble suburbs of West Baltimore.

The backs of these inserts were like prototypical Wikipedia pages, an instructive antidote for road-trip tedium, containing need-to-know facts and less-than-vital trivia. That Columbus was almost called Ohio City, for instance, or that in 1926 Ohio State crowned a heifer as its homecoming queen. That the stone tavern outside of Uniontown, PA, is both an old Civil War encampment and a great place to get a cheeseburger. Where to stop for the night if you lose your verve. Where to pull over for family photos. Where to go to the bathroom. The whole thing was designed to, of course, get you there. But also to enlighten you—to prevent the paralysis of autopilot—and to delight you, when, every 50 miles or so, you could flip to the next page, feeling like you had been somewhere even if you had been nowhere at all.

Once this book—like the annotated bibliography of your trip—was bound with an official-looking curl of plastic, I'd stuff it and the map into a white envelope scribbled with a last name. I would scan the bookshelf behind my desk for the official AAA guidebook to the Mid-Atlantic States. I would insert the Baltimore tourism brochure, and—why

not?—information on Washington, DC. Maybe this party would never be so close again.

I was a teenager. The architect behind hundreds of family vacations. That was me.



*Shoulder* | KARL ZUEHLKE

It wasn't long before I began pilfering brochures from the purple filing cabinets where the books and guides were kept in bulk, huge troves of possibility. I would stash them away in my own makeshift desk at home. But it was the maps I loved most. These maps were a literature, written in a nearly indecipherable language that drove me wild with desire. They were a primary text, and over the next few years I would supplement them with the supporting materials easy enough for a kid to find: Kerouac, Muir, Dillard, Heat-Moon, McPhee. My curriculum in wandering, *Traveling 101*.

I don't remember pulling pages for US 50 across Nevada, but I'm sure I did; a lot of well-intentioned parents liked to take their kids out west on the back roads—not just a passage, a rite of passage, they thought.

I would guess that the highway is divided into two TripTik inserts, one from Carson City to Austin, and another from Austin to Baker, not far from the entrance to Great Basin National Park. The first page would surely detail the roadside petroglyphs just outside Fallon: 7000-year-old etchings on boulders strewn around the dirt like bowling balls. It would have trumpeted Sand Mountain, a lone two-mile-long dune left over from a lake that dried up 9,000 years ago, standing tall and ominous as a shark's fin. Pony Express stops would be noted, and maybe Stokes Castle, an



imposing three-story home built by a mining magnate on the side of a mountain. His family lived there for a month before leaving Nevada for good.

The second page would have taught me all about the Silver Rush, of towns that boomed and busted in short order—like Hamilton, its ghostly homes and headstones still to be found 10 bumpy miles down a forest service road—and cities that managed to survive, like Ely, where today copper is the new silver.

And somewhere I would have gleaned that the Great Basin wasn't a single co-ordinance but a constellation of open land. A collection of tangents blooming around me at varying angles and distances, a huge trove of possibility.

Today, AAA offers internet TripTiks, similar to any other web mapping service, with options for “rest areas” and “scenic route.” It's just a print-off though, one you can make and modify at home without anybody's input. A page or two that you can staple together or just fold in half and stuff in your bag. Certainly not designed to be tucked away as a keepsake, as my grandfather did with all of his TripTiks, each one scribbled with notes: gas mileage, motel reviews, what the kids ate.

My dad remained at AAA until very recently. It wasn't the rheumatoid arthritis that ended his 27-year tenure in the mailroom. Not the chronic leukemia that came later. Rather one of the last in a wave of layoffs that had slowly

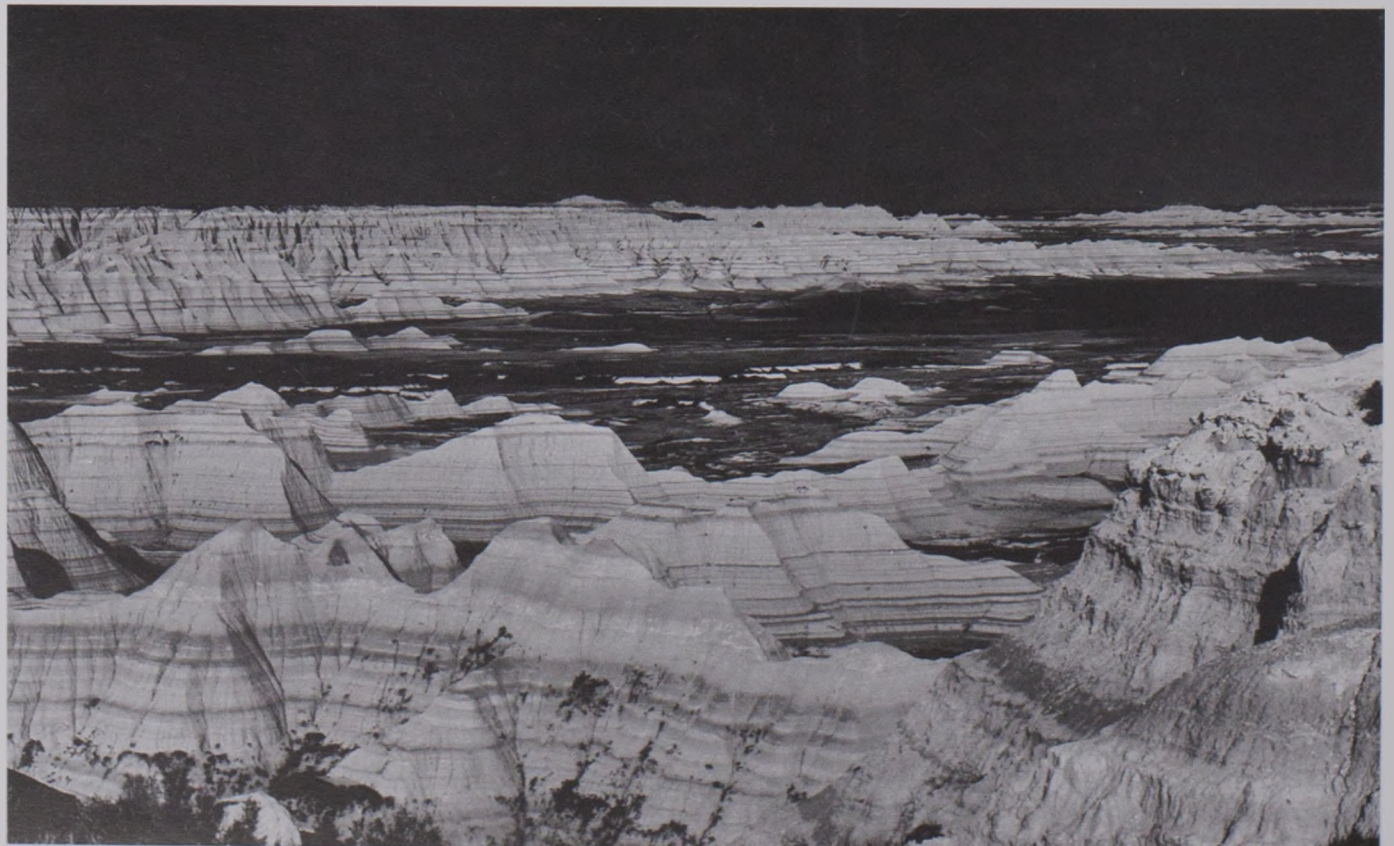
siphoned the people I knew, the folks my Dad worked with, from the yellow brick building. Last year, the office officially closed.

In my mid-30s, I'm too young to feel wistful for the good ol' days. But I do. I feel that way.

An ex used to complain that our vacations were never relaxing or restorative experiences, notable for the hours we didn't spend prostrate in a beach chair or face-down on some greasy massage table. That couldn't we visit a place sometime, not a road or a region or a whole goddamned temperate zone? Take a trip that didn't involve a stack of maps as well as ample opportunities for conflict and disaster, bearings and love lost in perfect tandem?

But I had long ago rejected the easy sophism of a place for the hard-won syllogism of the road.

I think about them a lot: all those harried road-trip dads, relying on a map drawn by a girl who had been approximately nowhere, who barely had her driver's license. I used to laugh at the irony of that. But more and more I realize that's the way I want to travel. With the hunger of naivety and the tenacity of a novice. So when I push my nose into a flannel shirt that smells like Nevada, it's the whole of the Great Basin I inhale. Like the land itself, it's a memory wide enough to get lost in, with space to contain the joy of wonder sated and the grief of roads I've left behind. ☹



*Hope Yet* | FABRICE POUSSIN



# Meditation on a Tendency to Be Seasick

TARA SHEPERSKY

I try to travel in such  
a way that I have nothing to do.

On the train I was going  
to read a new book of poems.  
But my head unclasps  
when I let it query the fields,  
white as manna fallen  
from the foothills, bright  
with painted boxes--loosely  
stacked, the way I wish  
to rest. I conjure the  
rolling joy of bees,  
precious bodies humming  
along to the rails.

On the ferry from Anacortes,  
the sea reminds me,  
with little kicks like  
a child who can't wait to be born:  
*Whatever*  
*you wished to accomplish, make*  
*your*  
*offering. Cast it to the cloudshadows*  
*flowering*  
*down slow-waked island flanks.*  
*Paint,*  
*with your regard, purple rivers.*

I study Aurelius, who  
counsels that I should let desires go.  
I haven't decided whether  
I agree with him.  
*Reach*  
*for a rope of kelp from a wind-trimmed vessel.*  
When I roll my eyes,  
there are the clouds to follow.  
Attending to them teaches  
that they speak. Also, the sea.  
Also, that inner unfurling  
requiring my silence.

*Maybe*  
*you think you're going somewhere, is that it?*  
*I*  
*tell you: you're in my own country now.*



# Missoula Writing Collaborative:

NICK LITTMAN AND CAROLINE PATTERSON

The place poems here were written by Missoula fourth graders. They are just 3 of more than 500 place poems that make up the Missoula Children's Poetry Map, a digital story map of poems, recordings, and drawings that together create a picture of how Missoula's children experience their urban, rural, and wild landscapes.

Missoula children love to be outside. In the course of creating this map, it was surprising and gratifying to witness the importance of the outside world—rivers, streams, trails, parks, sledding hills, swimming pools, and tree forts—to Missoula's children. Whether they are skateboarding at Mobash Skate Park, skiing at Snowbowl Ski Area, hiking up the "M" or Mt. Jumbo, or picnicking under squirrel chatter in Pattee Canyon, they are alive and alert, their senses and synapses snapping.

In this way, Missoula is raising children who are intimately aware of the place in which they live. They know many of the places we as adult Missoulians know, but they see what we do not see, focusing less on the attributes of the place and more on the experience of the place from their own present, attentive perspective. In the Missoula Children's Poetry Map, you will find that even places that are written about again and again—the Carousel, the "M", Bonner Park—are each time explored anew. These young poets latch on to how the place made them feel: the chlorine shooting up their nose with they snorted with laughter down the slide; the sun warming and reddening the backs of their necks as they dug their hands into moist garden soil with Grandma. As they connect their external surroundings with their internal feelings, Missoula fourth graders are becoming attuned to the sensibilities of place. Knowing a place only leads to caring about it, and protecting it into the future. That caring may grow the roots of their legacy here.

The creation of this map was a true collaboration. It was imagined by Missoula Writing Collaborative (MWC) Executive Director Caroline Patterson, funded by an NEA Our Town Grant and carried to completion by a host of local organizations. Ken Wall and Kyle Balke of Geodata Services organized all the poems, recordings, and images together into an accessible digital Story Map form. The professional writers of the Missoula Writing Collaborative taught place poem lessons to students in all nine Missoula Public Schools (and Sussex School). School librarians and MWC staff helped students to upload their poems and hand-drawn images. The Missoula Public Library encouraged Caroline's idea to grow feet and now hosts a permanent iPad kiosk which allows anyone visiting the library to explore the Story Map. Finally, the images you see accompanying these poems are from the Illustrated Children's Poetry Map, designed by Greg and Chris Robitaille of Xplorer Maps. The illustrated map, also available on any digital device, paired twenty excellent poems with Chris' beautiful drawings. Both the full, 500-poem Storymap and the illustrated map can be found at: <https://arcg.is/jynGj>.

Since 1994, The Missoula Writing Collaborative has taught more than 40,000 students the power of finding their voice as writers. They place professional writers in 31 schools around Western Montana to teach literary competence, critical thinking, cultural awareness, and artistic joy through creative writing. MWC has been a proud non-profit sponsor of Camas for many years.



Scan this QR code to view the children's poetry map.



## place poems from missoula's children



*Mount Jumbo* | XPLOER MAPS

### Mount Jumbo

MOLLY DOMBROWSKI, RATTLESNAKE ELEMENTARY

Brothers and friends ahead of you getting a start  
you  
with that scrunched up agitated face stumbling  
on the dusty steps  
near the lavatory, twigs in your hair  
Ekk!  
Dirty summer locks you with your awesome ponytail  
Extra pieces falling out  
Finally you get to the opening  
You plop down  
In the rocky dust  
Hands on your knees as you wait for your mom  
You look at your home  
Mother earth  
squinting  
at the sun  
the beige grass  
feeling uneasy  
and not knowing why  
At the next switchback melted  
now white  
M&Ms in your small dirty palms  
the dust makes you slip  
As you put your shoe on a keen boulder  
tripping  
then wailing  
not because you're hurt  
but because you dropped your M&Ms  
the burning  
stinging  
feeling as you look at your hands  
covered in mother earth's warmth



## The Aquarium

DOMINIKA WADE, RATTLESNAKE ELEMENTARY

I like to call it the aquarium where minnows play  
in a rusty tub in a nook of Rattlesnake Creek.  
In the water's surface, my face is glassy and clear.  
An old metal tube belches water on my sunburned toes.  
No one finds  
me here where I hide in leafy crevasses.  
Summer is over. I leave here.  
I don't come back, but I will.  
Soon. Autumn leaves drift into the  
Crashing rapids of the main creek.  
I lift maple leaves off the tub's surface.  
Minnows still play there. They seem  
Grateful they can see more light.  
I hear my name calling out. In winter  
branches of big oak trees  
create a canopy over my spot.  
I look different in my hat and snow pants.  
The tub is frozen and there is icy water  
underneath. The river still crashes angrily.  
No more flip-flops on my sunburned toes.  
I have clunky boots where snowflakes rest  
In silence. Icicles hang on the oak trees like stalagmites in  
a dark cavern. I am cold.  
but I want to stay. Cold hands slip into pockets. Hat is  
Pulled over my head.  
My name echoes into the woods.  
Time to head home.  
Spring now. Flowers poke out of  
The soil and the  
Sun shines brightly.



Grandma's Garden | XPLOER MAPS



Rattlesnake Creek | XPLOER MAPS

## GRANDMA'S GARDEN

ANNABELLE WILLIAMS, PAXSON ELEMENTARY

During the summer it was always full of tulips, roses, strawberries, apples, cherries, plums and raspberries. The old stone path is warm beneath my bare toes. The old maple tree creates a warm shadow. A swing hangs from one of the branches. Moss and warm grass make soft cushions. Brightly colored butterflies flutter around and land on my nose. The air is filled with sweet sound of birds mixed with the smell of the tulips and roses. The cherries are sweet. The strawberries are warm and fresh. The apples are crisp. The plums are sweet-and-sour at the same time. The raspberries are sweet and juicy. The sun is warm on my shoulders, toes, and legs.



# Dark Matter

FICTION | MAJO DELGADILLO

For a long time Zachary didn't really think about the sound. Every month, he said, he would imagine a different set of logical reasons for it: the neighbors, the pipes, mice, the old wooden floors, his own bones cracking, an echo of his movements saved and replayed inside the architectural carcass of the building. It was simple enough to ignore because that's how it is with old buildings: they have their own orchestras. Not like the soft humming of the AC that new homes have, but more like a crappy love song being played in the background. Something annoying only at first that, afterwards, becomes comforting and charming.

I was homeless that summer. It's the summer of transitions, Zachary declared as he gave me the key to his one bedroom apartment. We made a good team because I was living out of a suitcase and he was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Inside the apartment I found his universe: all over the walls were diagrams and maps understandable only to him. I made a contribution and hung the one photograph that I had: the one of unknown kids hugging. The summer of transitions is the perfect time, he told me, to start writing that novel. Sipping coffee he showed me how he would make it all connect, work, speak on its own voice and on its own terms. It was not a simple task, the one on his shoulders, but he would honor it, he promised. More than writing, he said, he was trying to figure out a way to compose a story that involved a process of randomness through a mathematical divination algorithm. Thumbtacks held together a strand of bright pink yarn that marked the points in which that process was providing the plot and, as weeks passed, the letters of rejection and bills that we started collecting, addressed to this fake home that was his apartment.

I could freely roam around the old neighborhood, but because the heat of summer in the city kept me inside during the day, I started hearing it too. The sound. At first

I thought it was coming from outside. It had to come from outside. Why else would it be happening at the times it was? It was not until I came home one early morning, high on coffee and sugar after spending the night on my favorite



*Shadows of the Futile* | MOHAMMAD ALI MIRZAEI



diner, that I found Zachary sitting cross legged in the middle of the room, all limbs and knots. The lights were turned off, a painful silence pierced the apartment. He said he was really listening for the first time. He sang three adjectives, deep, dry, and patterned, in a low voice he reserved for mantras. Finally, he handed me a notebook with his notes on this subject: a beautiful scaled map of the space marking the paths the sound had followed through the night, while I had been gone, in different colors.

That morning, without talking about it, we made a pact to untangle the source of the sound. The first couple of weeks afterwards were pure pleasure. We surely knew how to play detective as we both had read Bolaño. We would stay inside, drinking coffee and tea and eating out his food. We would stare at each other suspiciously. We would walk around the one bedroom apartment recreating the paths. One or two steps into the hallway, three more until we were stepping on his mattress. Music was forbidden unless it was played through headphones, and so was laughing out loud, a rule at which we failed miserably.

We were determined to decipher what the sound was not.

Sometimes it was easy: bones cracking don't really produce that kind of dry sound. He could scratch that one off. Others were harder. Luckily the neighbors moved out, with their five kids and all, and the house was inspected thoroughly for vermin. Then he had no other choice but to take those out of the list too.

This is one of the first signs of possession, I told him, my knowledge coming, as always, from fiction. Echo? He asked. No, I said. Steps following you around. But we both knew it wasn't possession. It couldn't be. Both our souls had decreased value in the market for such things, as there was no demand; and we were both too old to be innocent.

We didn't have a sleeping pattern during our summer with the sound, particularly because stomping and stepping became different and more nuanced once we figured out its favorite times and spots. It would be loud on early mornings, but not the loudest. It seemed mostly agile and fast. Almost fragile, it seemed.

When I was a toddler, I told him in the dark, I would wake up this early, and run to my parents bedroom on the weekends, then I would whisper really fast on my I-want-to-be-taken-seriously way of speaking "canIpleaseturntheTVontowatchcartoonsinaverylowvolume." I was trying not to wake them up, I said. He laughed quietly. After a while, when it seemed to run away, he whispered that it indeed sounded like a toddler stomp. In silence, I wished we could hear a TV turning on afterwards. A TV turning on to watch nineties cartoons in a very low volume.

I feel evangelical about the electrical universe, Zachary said one afternoon, popping his head inside the apartment while



*Followed* | DANIELLE HARK



half of his body remained outside, smoking a cigarette. I was trying still to grasp the idea of a vacuum, after watching videos of how things, both heavy and light things, fall inside vacuums. How can a room be turned into a vacuum, and if sound can travel through a vacuum. How could that be possible if there is no air for the sound waves to travel. The electrical universe? I asked. He came inside really fast and typed into his computer the name of a scientist I forgot immediately. We spent the next hours watching recorded lectures about the electrical universe until it made sense in our minds, even

though we were both humanities students, probably possessed, broke and homeless from my side, who knew very little about astrophysics.

So, I asked after a while of staring at the blackened screen, you don't think there is such a thing as dark matter? Well, it can't be if the universe is electrical, he answered. But it was hard for me to believe that there could not be a thing such as dark matter. There had to. What else in the world could produce black holes and what else in the world could stomp as decisively as the noise on the top floor of the building?

You know, he said one night while we were in the living room, tracing what sounded like soft steps upwards; I was grounded as a teenager once, like really grounded. I couldn't leave my room and my parents even called my best friend's younger brother to keep an eye on me. At that point we probably hadn't slept in more than twenty four hours. And then what happened? I answered laying on my back to stretch my muscles. I had another best friend at the time, Zachary said, and he picked up my girlfriend and drove her to my home. She climbed up the window and we spent the night together. And then, he continued, my friend picked her back up very early in the morning. So nobody knew, we both said at the same time.

I never owned a vacuum so even the thought of the appliance was new and foreign. Maybe that's why, when I went back to sleeping for a few hours each day, I started having nightmares of floating or falling in a space that looked exactly like the vacuums from the videos, and like the chamber of the vacuum Zachary kept in a corner at the same time. I think I was the most scared by the fact that there was no sound in the dream. It felt almost as cliché as being inside a bubble. Maybe that is what being deaf means. Once a guy asked me if I would rather go blind or deaf, I told Zachary the morning after the first nightmare, and I said I would rather go blind because I could not stand to not be able to listen to music. He was busy redoing the algorithm and tracing the ways his story would go, and how the stomping affected us as the characters we were in that

universe. He went through the notes and the many maps we had gathered about our experience, to see if there was a way of transforming them into the code he was developing. It was the summer of creating this world, after all; so I poured myself some more tea and googled "is there sound in a black hole?" Apparently there is a way of listening in a black hole, or that's what my frantic reading made me believe. I wanted to tell Zachary that even though I, too, felt evangelical about electricity, I was more and more convinced that we were co-sleeping with dark matter. With the sounds inside

a black hole and the echoes of something that was outweighing us.

We both woke up when we heard it. In one motion I slithered

out of the mattress and moved as fast and quietly as possible to the living room where Zach was. The sound seemed to have multiplied. As if several sets of sounds were pounding the floor at the same time. It started really loudly but, with time, it seemed to align and make sense. It was Zach who got it at first, not me, I was too busy and too marveled to understand the logic in it, but since he had been working out the logic of something else it made sense for him.

They're dancing, he whispered. It is dancing. And even without any perceivable music, it was true, they were. It was. Our dark matter was dancing its sorrows away. We had had our own dance parties in the past, both together and apart. Equally high on adrenaline and rejoicing on the momentum. I had told Zachary about how, in high school, my best friend and I had danced to Le Tigre the day before she killed herself. About being older and going out to conquer the dance floor only for the fun of it, holding someone's hand. About how a lover had fallen in love with me just because I loved dancing so much. About how when I was the saddest I would put on a show for myself in front of the mirror and sweat it out. About how all these things aligned and constructed me. Then, a few months ago, we had our own dance party marking what I believed was the real beginning of our friendship, jumping up and down in the living room where we were now sitting quietly. We had slept together on that very same floor. It was a vivid memory because the neighbors who moved out used that dance party as a excuse for their own very loud gatherings ever since. Do you remember for how long we were dancing? I asked him. It should stop in an hour or so, said Zach, making some room for me to lay down as we did that first night of our friendship, when I still had a home to get to, and when the noise was not trying to plagiarize us.

So apparently, I announced a few days later, pulling out my phone to read from a website called space.com, scientists

I wanted to tell Zachary that even though I, too, felt evangelical about electricity, I was more and more convinced we were co-sleeping with dark matter.



calculate the mass of large objects in space by studying their motion. Which is how they know there is dark matter. Which means that even if they can't see it, they can measure the motions. And even though I had not explained why, Zachary understood what I meant and nodded. Dark matter? He asked, carefully. As if not completely sure if what he was saying was allowed. But why would it even want to move here, to this neighborhood? Well, I said. It's one bus away from downtown and a fifteen minutes bike ride from all the cool bars. For a second we stared at each others faces. Then, the spell broke and we laughed until our stomachs hurt so bad, Zachary had to write it down for his novel.

We went through the special questions people ask each other when they become friends, but instead of trying to figure each other out, we were studying the motions. Calculating. I had gotten a zero on my GRE test, but Zach was very good at math, or so it seemed, and we started to pour all the information that we had, composing new and revolutionary formulas to understand dark matter. Zach wanted to add something about electricity. And what if not electricity are we, he asked while calculating. I recalled how much I loved the concept of an electric heart. Of how heart failure is just a powerless heart. I hate getting shocks I told him. I remember going up the plastic ladders at McDonalds with socks on, and how the static made the ride as painful as it made it fun, but I stopped because I hated the shocks. I mostly hated the sound, the very loud pop that electricity creates. But that's not useful, he answered, calculator in hand. No, I know, I responded quietly, still trying to figure out what had happened the day before, when the sound was much more similar to slamming doors than steps. Did your parents fight? I wondered. Slamming doors and all, he smirked. How many doors? I pursued, because in the apartment where the door slamming happened for me, we only had two possible slams and, according to the notes, last night it seemed to had been at least four different ones.

I was going back home after the summer, but dark matter started to pack up earlier, so I followed. It had been so accurate before we couldn't afford to let it down. We choreographed the scene together, Zachary, dark matter

and me, carefully, around the living room in which the pink strand had combined in so many places it seemed like a scene from a movie in which teenage girls make pentagrams out of macramé. That seems like a very complicated story, I told Zachary while arranging the shoes in the order that seemed to imitate the deeps and highs of the sounds upstairs. I don't think it's just a story anymore, he answered, what do you think it is? He caught me off-guard in the midst of pushing books away from smallest to loudest. I stared



*Swing* | SARA BROWN was mimicked by our dark matter mascot. I knew that we were both there in his story, me and our beloved sound, so I said the first thing that, after that intense flashback, came to mind.

Well, do you remember that scientists calculate the mass of large objects in space by studying their motion? A-ha, he said, staring at me. So, if this is not a story, I said pointing at the notes and maps, at the strand and the drawings and the formulas and calculations that had occupied our summer, if it is not a story then it is motion, you know? I started laughing uncontrollably. If this is not a story, I said, you are creating a movement. A large object in space that moves. Like a vacuum. Like dark matter. And I finally got it, how vacuums work. And I lay down on the floor, laughing still, trying to be quiet and see if we could still reach our neighbor. But after that, our ears just started buzzing. 🐝



# *The Fourth Element*

JEFF FEARNSIDE

I

Silence is a revealing  
of sounds normally unheard  
in the everyday noise of our lives:

ghostly huffing of pines,  
crisp trilling of oaks,  
tinkling paper chimes of aspen.

In our so-called silence we hear  
how rustling grasses sound differently  
in seasons:

a short whistling in spring,  
full-flowing rush in summer,  
dry crackling in fall,  
spare hollowness in winter.

II

Silence is a name  
for what we do not  
pay attention to:

a snail composting a leaf,  
worms digesting decay to make soil,  
each pellet of pollen dropped  
by each bee onto  
the flowers of our food.

III

Silence is the fourth element  
of the universal sound:

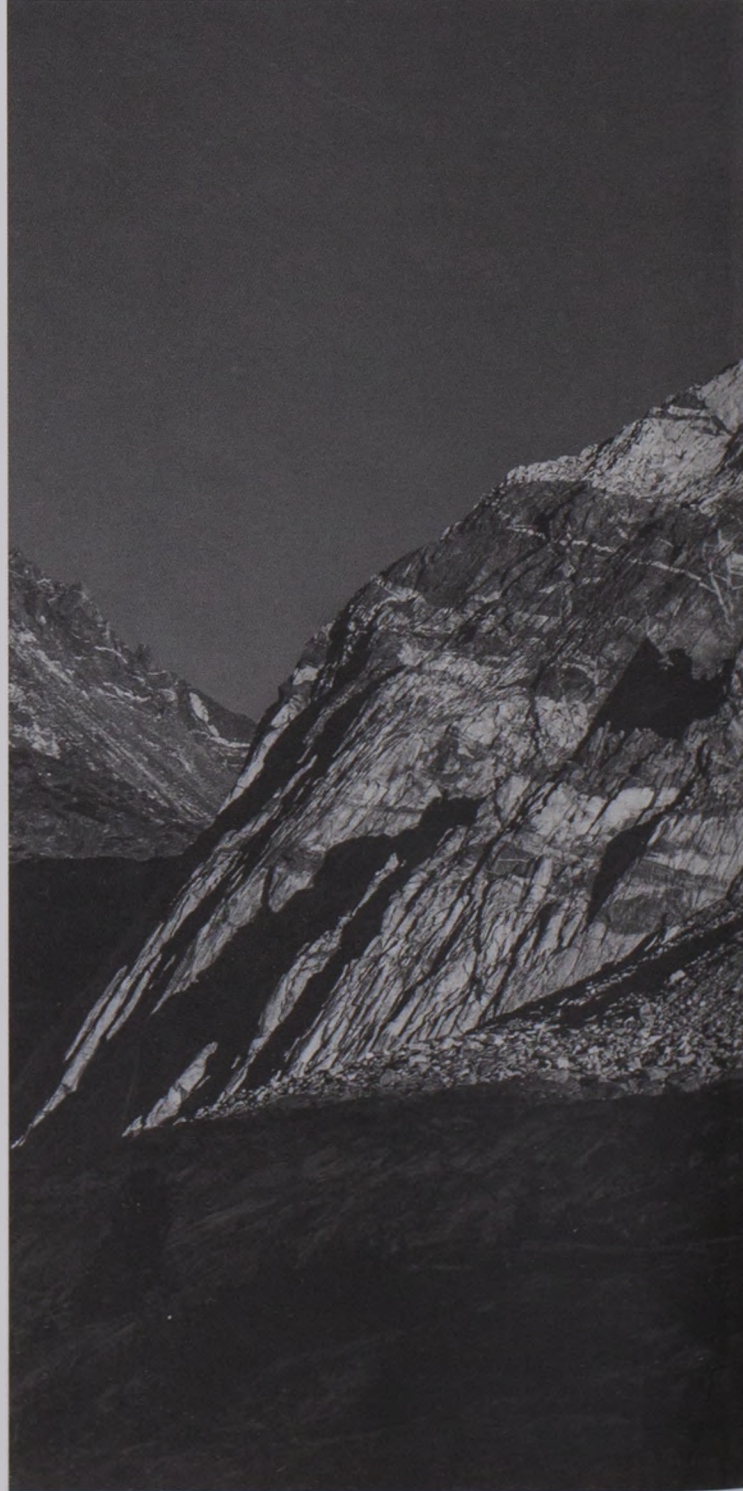
after the opening of the breath,  
the filling of the mouth,  
and the closing of the breath,  
there is the emptiness into which all dissolves  
and out of which all arises again.



# PREDATION I

NORAH ESTY

The contrast stark, arresting: white to red.  
I knelt to see the blood upon the snow  
And touch the velvet tufts of fur that showed  
Where someone died and someone else was fed.  
A scene unbidden came into my head:  
The silent creep, the pounce, a dash too slow,  
The cry, the vicious shake, the final throes,  
The limp and lifeless body, torn and bled.  
Starvation, too, is sorrow. To have fled  
And failed, a common trauma, as they go.  
A daily thing, this drama, to and fro;  
Life fleeing life as life has always fled.  
I pause, a prayer forming in my mind—  
Let us be nourished, if we can't be kind.







*The Painted Lady* | KYLE BRADFORD



# On Slowing Down

NONFICTION | DOV WEINMAN

The day was marked on the calendar months before. A date in mid-December circled in red pen and HOME written in capital letters. Looking ahead toward the date for so long made it feel heavy—weighted. As with any major life change, returning home from more than three years in the Peace Corps came with elevated expectations. I remember feeling excited. And also, anxious. I was anxious to know what would still feel like home. And what wouldn't. I was worried to see how much had become unfamiliar. Initially, homecoming is filled with the recreation of old rituals. Familiar passages of routine, worn smooth and grooved into the bed of memory. A couple of weeks since my return to the Willamette Valley in Oregon and it is these rituals keeping me tethered.

I add a couple of inches by rising up on my toes so I can peer through the glass over the top of the front door. I'm checking the weather, trying to discern what type of armor to don in today's battle with the winter elements. The quick view tells me what I could have guessed. Gray skies threatening rain; the staple diet of winter weather in Western Oregon. Sitting down in the entry way, I slide my

trail shoes onto each calloused foot. Pre-laced and covered with mud from the previous day's effort, the shoes are well worn. Still, I am unwilling to retire them. Flexible and formed to the shape of my soles, at this point they feel like an extension of my legs. I readjust my backwards ballcap over my thicket of wavy hair and resign myself to the rush of cold air ushered in from opening the door. I hear it click behind me, tap the start of my stopwatch, and descend the street toward single-track trails in the nearby forest.

At a time in my life with so much uncertainty, I look to these brief pilgrimages into the woods to feel the familiar. While the last decade introduced changes to the home I grew up in, the forested areas near my neighborhood continue to serve as a welcome refuge. Though I am not sure if it is home or myself that I recognize less often, these trails are always familiar.

I barely take the time to process returning after my time away in the Peace Corps. I'm filled with wants and cravings. I cram in all my favorite foods. It is the feast after the fast. I try to visit all my favorites places. I collect locations like souvenirs, quickly becoming a tourist



Untitled | GUILHERME BERGAMINI



in what had once just been the landscape of my home. I devour everything too fast to enjoy. The proverbial kid in the candy store.

The large appetite I have for tasting all the elements of home leaves me feeling somewhat desperate. I feel rushed, as if I'll soon be leaving again and I'll lose my chance for my long-awaited communion with home. As if something might take it all away. The landscape around me becomes a checklist.

I monitor the types of birds I see on my daily runs in the dense forest near my parents' house. I mentally note a starry-feathered starling and a varied thrush. I see the blue jays, Northern flickers, and nuthatches. I also note the trees the birds dart from. Traipsing through the Douglas-fir dominated forests, I keep an eye out for my favorite flora and fauna. I'm voracious, finding in each sighting a sort of trigger for another memory. My appetite never abates. I often feel anxious and spend more time wandering forest trails than reconnecting with the friends I haven't seen in years. The days turn over quickly and I worry time will run out before I will get my fill.

I am in a popular café near the city's downtown and a few blocks away from my high school alma mater. I'm waiting to meet with a good friend, someone I haven't seen in nearly five years. I'm excited to catch up, wanting to hear all about the recent events in her life. Surely there is a lot of ground for each of us to cover. It's the same feeling that has defined my homecoming; that I've missed so much for too long.

It's easy to spot her as she enters. Her light face is set off by dark eyebrows over big, expressive eyes. She wears her curly, black hair long. She spots me quickly as well, and we settle into seats opposite each other at a square, wooden table. The café is popular and today nearly all the seats are filled. To keep from fidgeting I place my hands around my coffee mug. My palms and fingers absorb the warmth. The two of us have never had much use for small talk. It isn't long before she launches into a long story about a single day, now five or six years ago, where we baked scones and wandered around parts of Brooklyn. She's a great writer and has a memory for everything. Her narrative is layered with remarkable detail and two things occur to me while listening. The first is I'm astonished how much time she is dedicating to an old memory about baking scones. The other is, for the first time since returning I'm compelled to slow down and really observe. This is her story. I'm content to watch and listen. In my return to Eugene I'd been looking for plenty of things, but not truly observing. Observation implies intention. It entails a quality of care. As she amplifies her story by stacking the details and gesturing

with her hands, I'm studying a face I've missed. Is it much changed? Are there new lines when she smiles? Is her hair the same? I sip my coffee. I listen. I feel incredibly relaxed. It's hard for me to pinpoint why.

After we say goodbye, I stop along the sidewalk next to my car. A slight rain started again, barely misting. It's the kind of rain so quintessential of the Willamette Valley.

So delicate you feel as if the rain isn't touching you. The kind that makes the air smell clean and earthy. I close my eyes and really feel it. The same relaxed sensation comes back. What is it? At the moment I only find one word to

describe what I'm feeling. Slowness.

Had I forgotten slowness? My urgency to refamiliarize myself with home after many months of homesickness degraded my ability to slow down. I moved through the locus of home at the wrong pace. I was collecting—had become a collector, collecting photographs, bird sightings, plant species, and tastings at local eateries. How much extended thought had I given these instances of reconnection? Was I simply moving too quickly?

Winter is not the time to rush. Winter is for moving slowly. For methodical patience. Winter months are for eating and storing food, for hibernation. And for rest. These are the months to watch stews simmer. To bake bread in a cold home and stand next to the open oven to soak up extra warmth. It is a good time of year to make tea and read by a large window. My first cold season in years, I had meant to take advantage of these dark months for introspection. To coil the spirit and body in anticipation of spring and summer. While collecting I wondered if I sacrificed my ability to relearn the specific language that allows us to make home feel like home. But I felt that my ability to draw upon my language of home was still intact—that the issue was something else. I still speak the language of home—the language of bubbling creeks and moss carpet and hawk scream. I knew it but perhaps became out of touch with the pace at which the language was meant to be spoken. This was what I needed to relearn.

Each of us knows a language of home. One definition of language is any one of the systems of human language that are used and understood by a particular group of people. It could be tied to a piece of land. A family. A van. Home could be a forest, a workplace, a volunteer group. It's specific to each of us. I am not really writing about spoken language. I refer to our ability to know a place, the language of communicating with home. A personalized vernacular constructed of people and place. It is learned through connection. Learned over time, it is texture, memory, bird call, bloom-scent, familiar tongue, and rainfall. It is sandy

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feet and mossy lawns. It is living. We must continually listen.

A few weeks after arriving I realize it has been too long since I listened well. This means slowing down. The same way my friend slowed me down when I listened to her storytelling. This listening and learning may be a lifelong process, but it has never meant we cannot leave home from time to time. But we have to listen while we move. And listen again—slowly—when we return. Being place-based does not mean being immobile. Geese migrate. Caribou migrate. Salmon of the Pacific Northwest make pilgrimages through waterways they've never known. Monarchs flutter across the continent. Part instinct. Part crash course in the necessary learning of home. I must believe a person can leave and still return to relearn the way of knowing home. But we must dedicate time to learning. Again and again.

I construct home with my own associations. Certain beings, plants, spirits, weather patterns, and stories become building blocks. I build them and when I must, I use them to renovate. These building blocks can travel. I carry them with me. Tokens and artifacts. When I saw damp forests of fern and moss in New Zealand, I revisited pieces of home. The massive cedars I encountered in the woods of Japan were also home. I felt home in the remains of a synagogue in an old Jewish quarter in a Spanish city, and in the embrace of someone on sandy shores on an island in the Philippines. These artifacts of home were all little returns—short homecomings keeping me connected.

I arrive at the trailhead in eleven or twelve minutes. I've logged incalculable hours and thousands of miles in these damp, temperate woods. An ideal climate for growth and long intervals between catastrophic disturbance has made these forests lush and diverse. I move along the trail under the shade of a recognizable canopy. There are the drooping leaders of western hemlock, the mice-hiding cones of Douglas fir, and the upward turning branches of western redcedar. I'm always looking for the smooth, peeling red bark of madrone. Some of them are massive; a few of the Douglas firs appear to be hundreds of years old.

My body feels strong and I move up through the switchbacks easily. The trail is squishy with mud. I leave tracks in my wake. My breath condenses and collects on my shaggy beard. I hold cold fingers in the sleeves of my shirt. I continue to move to keep from getting cold, but I move along the trail at a fairly casual pace. Today I am not in a rush.

Not far off the trail I catch glimpses of the fruitless stems of salal, elderberry, and blackberry, all eaten by local

fauna and people indigenous to the Pacific Northwest for thousands of years. I continue up the trail, beginning to breathe harder with the extended climb. My trail shoes are now soggy, my legs knocking water off the ends of sword and lady fern. I high-step over the large conifer roots covered with recognizable liverworts and beard-like bryophytes. Every tree branch is soaked in cattail moss. Everything grows upon something else. The largest trees nurture an abundance of epiphytes, plants living on the surface of branches, and the decomposing nurse logs provide life-giving nutrients to the forest's next generations. The forest

reclaims itself. A cycle of life and death formed and understood over time. The plants are home to each other. And they are certainly home to me.

## As a lifelong runner, I commit myself to the one thing I have always tried to avoid. I commit to slowing down.

I've been climbing through the forest for nearly an hour. Between root-hops and puddle jumps my eyes steal glimpses of native fauna. Warblers and wrens dart from vine maple branches. I scare scavenging chipmunks off the trail. Even though overcast and gray, the winter sky is a bit lighter now. The dense canopy has gradually opened. A hawk I can't see calls out from above the forest. I'm breathing harder now. I'm nearing the summit.

I begin to renounce the notion that I am already familiar with my home. I resolve to observe things more carefully. As a lifelong runner, I commit myself to the one thing I have always tried to avoid. I commit to slowing down.

I begin close to the center at the house I grew up in. I revisit the twisted backyard apple tree, its unpruned shoots stretching skyward. At the window I witness jays and northern flickers bully the chickadees and nuthatches. I enjoy spotting the starry-feathered starlings. I find them beautiful, though I keep this to myself because my mother doesn't like feeding them. But my mother likes feeding everything else; the squirrels in our yard are the same size as the neighborhood cats. The rhododendrons always hold onto their green leaves through winter. In spring and summer we'll have purple, white, and pink blossoms. The lawn also stays green, but a closer look reveals it's comprised of more moss than grass. The oak stubbornly clings to a few of its clubbed leaves. Past the eight nights of Hanukkah my parents left the lighted Star of David in the large, street-facing window. I remember watching my father construct it when I was very young. Only now do I consider how privileged we are to live in a safe enough neighborhood where our family can broadcast Jewish symbols in the window.

I make sure to relocate old treasures in the house as well. One of my favorites is my grandfather's thick,



red flannel. Hanging in the closet for the last four years, it feels heavy and familiar on my shoulders. The second closet's shelves are stuffed with books. Every homecoming I gravitate toward the same authors. Authors that keep their own way of knowing home between their pages. Scanning the shelf, I pull off Ken Kesey, David James Duncan, Rebecca Solnit, and Gary Snyder and place them on the wooden desk. Soon I am settled in with Snyder's *Practice of the Wild*. The pages are stained yellow and slightly scented—citrus and hops—the result of a glass growler breaking in my backpack as I sat down in a café during graduate school. I love this copy. Near the desk is a small but heavy table I saved from a bonfire. It's made with parts of a wagon wheel. On the table I've assembled a small collection of earthly artifacts: a deer vertebra, an obsidian shard, a ginkgo fan, a buckeye, a lucky acorn, a flicker feather. It is my own type of natural altar, reminding me of my place within this greater space. They are my totems of home. Talismans against becoming too disconnected.

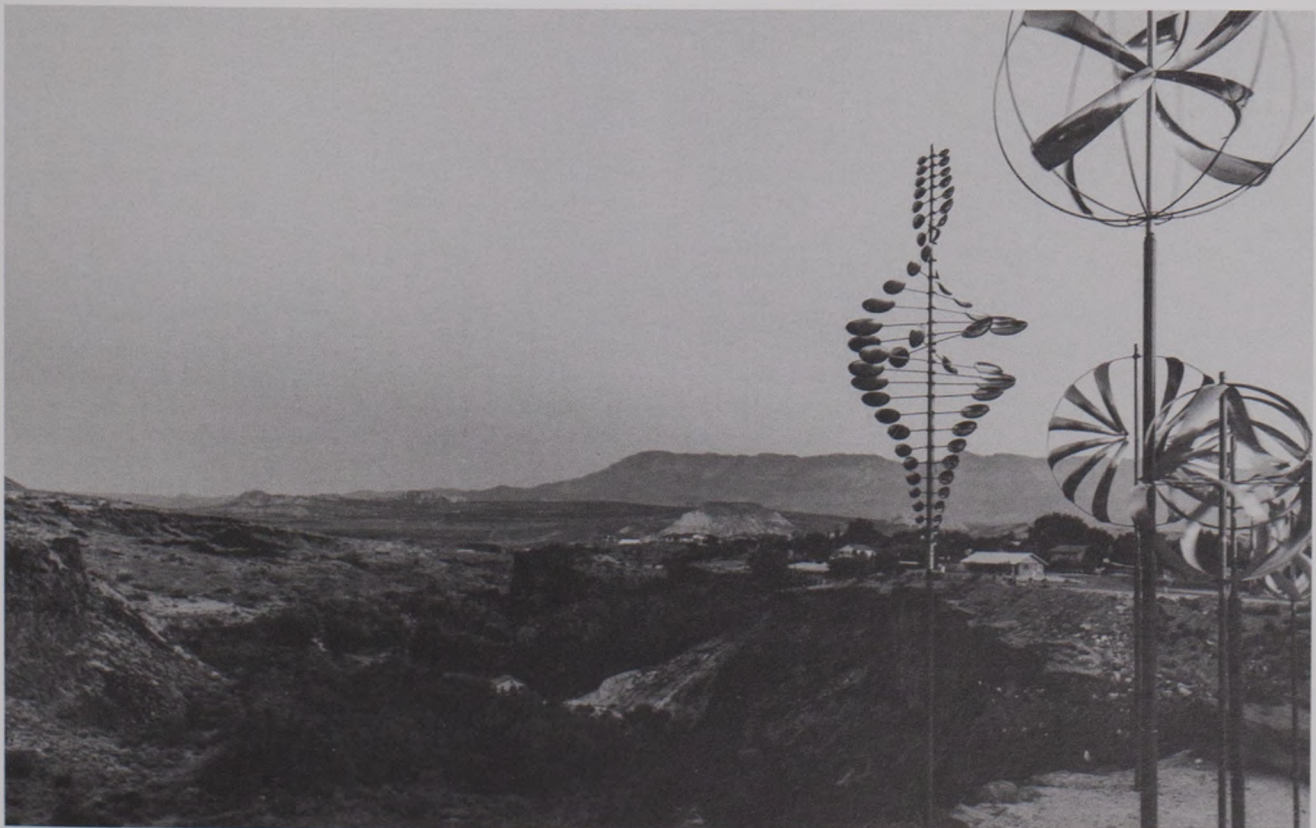
Adorning the walls are two framed Oregon Country Fair posters and some prints of photographs I've taken while abroad. There is a small photo of my grandmother on my mother's side holding me as a baby. It must have been taken in the early 90's. Another photo depicts my father's father at his small hamburger shop in Los Angeles. The signage in the photo says Mel's Place.

There is no limit to how familiar you can be to home. Even your own room. At first, I thought it was best to work

my way from outward in. I found in the ups and downs of this process of relearning that it is best to start at the center. You reconnect from the center out. And it is preferable to do it slowly.

It means returning to pine scent and dense fog on winter mornings. Returning to madrone, hummingbird flybys and cheap burrito joints. And crow laughter. And smelling cannabis in the backyard. And trees dripping long after the rain has gone.

At the rocky summit of Spencer Butte, a place called Cham-o-tee by the native Kalapuya, I finally come to a full stop. Here I am just over 2,000 feet above sea level. On a clear day I can see the snow-covered Cascades rising to the east and the rolling green coastal range to the west. Today it is barely clear enough to see down to the tree line. The mountain is covered with Oregon fog. Without the trees blocking the wind I feel it cutting through my layers. To keep moving is to keep warm, but I am not upset to leave the summit so quickly. I'll be back again soon. I begin down the trail leading back into the dark forest. Into madrone and hummingbird flybys. Into decomposing logs wallpapered with lichens. Into crow laughter and trees dripping water long after the rain has stopped. Into home. I feel my quad muscles firing hard to slow my steep descent. But it feels good to follow the trail slowly. I am glad to take my time.



As Still As | A.M. KENNEDY



LYN BALDWIN lives in southern British Columbia where she teaches university botany and ecology. An artist-naturalist, Lyn relies on her practice of illustrated field journals to help re-imagine relationships with home and community, place and dwelling. Her creative non-fiction and illustrations have been published in *The Goose and Terrain*.

GUILHERME BERGAMINI is Brazilian and graduated in Journalism. For more than two decades, his work has explored the dialogue between memory and social political criticism. He believes in photography as the aesthetic potential and transforming agent of society. Awarded in national and international competitions, Guilherme Bergamini participated in collective exhibitions in 21 countries.

KYLE BRADFORD is a naturalist and photographer currently pursuing a master's in conservation biology at Antioch University New England in Keene, NH. There, his work focuses on insect ecology and conservation. See more of his photography at [kylembradford.com](http://kylembradford.com).

SARA BROWN is a recent literature graduate from New Jersey who has pursued photography professionally for several years, but now enjoys it as a hobby. Her focus is centered on portraits, and she especially enjoys working in pastoral and desert settings, recently exploring the backdrop of Las Vegas.

C.W. BUCKLEY lives and works in Seattle with his family. Exploring geek culture, conscience, faith, and fatherhood, his recent work appears in *Image Journal* and *Cataraman Literary Review*. His chapbook *BLUING* is available from *Finishing Line Press*. Find @chris\_buckley on Twitter.

AMBER CARPENTER is an MFA graduate from Columbia College Chicago's Nonfiction program. She earned her MA in English from East Carolina University in 2012 with a concentration in both poetry and nonfiction. Her work, which includes writing and photography, has been published in *Sinister Wisdom*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Mount Hope Magazine*, and *Glassworks Magazine*.

WILL CORDEIRO has work appearing or forthcoming in *Best New Poets*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Copper Nickel*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Sycamore Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, and elsewhere. He co-edits the small press Eggtooth Editions. He lives in Flagstaff, where he is a faculty member in the Honors College at Northern Arizona University.

HANK DART is a medical writer, ultrarunner, and photographer who lives in Hailey, Idaho. He feels nature is sometimes best experienced a little tired, hungry, and out of breath - with camera in hand. His works have also appeared in *Mountain Flyer*, *Faster Skier*, *Trail Runner*, and *Running Times*.

MAJO DELGADILLO (Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, 1991) is a poet, writer, translator and digital media artist. She writes about bodies, memory, pop culture, dreams, machines, and the way these things intertwine in fictional and real life. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from UCSD and is a PhD student in Hispanic Studies at the University of Houston. She tweets @MariejoDel.

Raised in Montana, NORAH ESTY earned her B.S. in mathematics from MSU at age 17, followed by a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley. As a professor she studied topological dynamics, co-authored a textbook, and won teaching awards. She now lives off-grid in Oregon

writing poetry, raising sheep, and trying to learn Icelandic.

JEFF FEARNSIDE'S poetry has appeared in many literary journals and anthologies, including *The Fourth River*, *Pernafrost*, *Blue Earth Review*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and *Forest Under Story: Creative Inquiry in an Old-Growth Forest*. He teaches writing and literature at Oregon State University.

Poet, photographer and writer, BRIANA GERVAT received her masters in Art History at the Savannah College of Art and Design. After graduating from SCAD in Spring 2014, she traveled throughout the world to pursue her love of the arts. More of her poetry and prose can be found on her blog: [www.theperegrinepilgrim.com](http://www.theperegrinepilgrim.com)

DANIELLE HARK is an artist/writer who lives with PTSD and bipolar. She's the founder of the non-profit Broken Light Collective that empowers people with mental illness using photography. Danielle currently lives and creates in NJ with her husband, two young girls, 2.5 ukuleles, a Samoyed and a Scottish Fold. @daniellehark

JEFFREY HERSCH grew up in Indiana and studied with Henry Homes Smith at Indiana University. Swallowed the 60's whole and followed like a mantra what it said on the Indiana license plates: "Wanderer." Spent years in Nepal as a Peace Corps volunteer and now lives in the West rescuing dogs and trying to stop the BLM from the worst of their anachronistic policies.

DR. M JACKSON is a geographer, glaciologist, TED Fellow and National Geographic Society Explorer. M is the recipient of many grants and awards, including three U.S. Fulbright grants and a U.S. Fulbright Ambassadorship. She has written two books, *While Glaciers Slept* and *The Secret Lives of Glaciers*, and is working on her third. She currently serves as an Arctic Expert for the National Geographic Society.

ANA JOVANOVSKA was born in 1991 in Macedonia. She got her Master's Degree in Printmaking from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje and spent a semester attending École supérieure d'arts & médias de Caen/Cherbourg. She had 10 solo and over 100 group exhibitions. She currently works as an artist.

A.M KENNEDY is a writer, painter, and photographer from Tampa, Florida. Her work has been previously published in *3Elements Review*, *Popshot Magazine*, *The Burningword*, and others. She can be found at [amkenney.com](http://amkenney.com).

IRIS M. KIRKWOOD is an African American female. She tells stories with her art. Her mediums are pencil, colored pencils, pastel, and white out on manila folder. More of her work can be viewed at [www.imkirkwood.webs.com](http://www.imkirkwood.webs.com).

JULIE MASON is a photographer and poet. Her photos have been exhibited in fine art photography shows such as the Annual New Mexico Photographic Art Show (ANMPAS) for the last five years. She currently works as a librarian in New Mexico.

JENAH MEAD combines the study of nature and art to create detailed graphite illustrations of local flora and fauna. Her drawings embody her experiences observing and connecting with the natural world. Jenah invites viewers to slow down and notice the wonders surrounding them.

MOHAMMAD ALI MIRZAEI was born in Tehran, Iran. He studied News Photography at University of Culture & Art Isfahan and photos are published in *Midway Journal*, *TAYO*, *Columbia Journal*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Oxford*, *The Missing Slate*, *Silk Road Review* & *The Adroit Journal*. He is a member of the artistic team Paradise Ocean Literary & Photography Team, with management by Seyed Morteza Hamidzadeh.

ROBERT NOWAK is a nature photographer based in the Seattle area and has had the good fortune to be able to spend the last 35 years exploring and photographing some of the most beautiful parts of the western United States and Canada.

FABRICE POUSSIN teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and many other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, *the San Pedro River Review* as well as other publications.

SAM KECK SCOTT is a regularly featured author for the National Geographic Society, and the co-author of the children's book, *Sip the Straw*. His work has won the John Gardner Memorial Prize in Fiction, and has appeared in *Harpur Palate*, *The New Guard Literary Review*, and the *Earth First! Journal*.

TARA K. SHEPERSKY is an Oregon-based taxonomist, poet, essayist, and photographer. Her creative work explores the ways our inner and outer, individual and collective experiences speak, listen, and shape themselves to the land we live beside. Recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Shark Reef*, *The Hopper*, *Whitefish Review*, and *Cascadia Rising Review*, among others. Find her on Twitter @pdxpersky, and at [pdxpersky.com](http://pdxpersky.com).

ASHLEY STIMPSON is a writer based in Baltimore, MD. Her poetry and nonfiction have appeared in *Potomac Review*, *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, and elsewhere. In 2018, her work was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

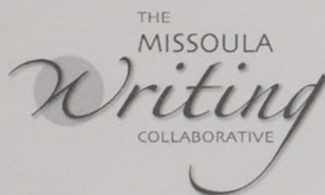
Oregonian mountain-poet DOV WEINMAN is fond of running ultramarathons, raising hens, and peanut butter on ice cream. After an MS in environmental studies from the University of Montana he became a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines. His poetry has appeared in the *Whitefish Review*, *Portland Review*, *Canary* and other publications.

MATT WITT is a photographer and writer from Oregon who has backpacked all over the West. His photography and blog may be seen at [MattWittPhotography.com](http://MattWittPhotography.com). He has been Artist in Residence at Crater Lake National Park, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Mesa Refuge, and PLAYA at Summer Lake.

KARI ZUEHLKE is a writer, artist, and translator. He is currently working on a series of paintings based on photographs. His visual art has recently appeared in *New Plains Review*, and is forthcoming in *The Penn Review*.

XPLORER MAPS journey was started by two brothers, Chris and Greg Robitaille. A talented, globe-trotting artist and an entrepreneurial geography buff, they create hand-drawn, antique-style maps of national parks and travel destinations that build meaningful connections between people and place worldwide.





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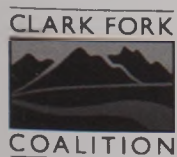
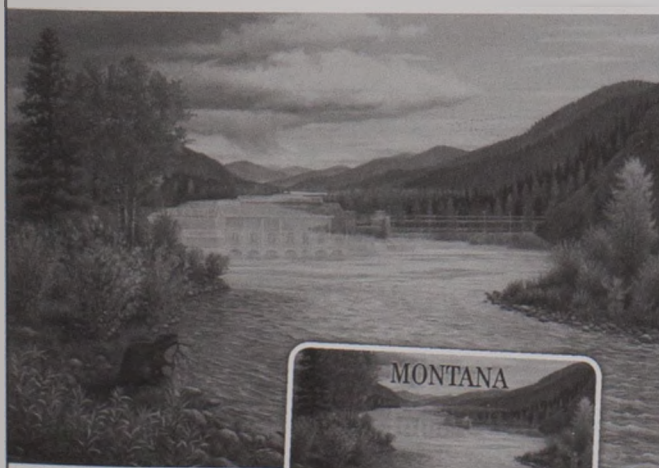


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